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# THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 28 March 1998 70p (IR70p) No 3,570

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

## Murdoch in secret trips to Chequers

Exclusive

By Chris Blackhurst and Colin Brown

RUPERT MURDOCH has been the guest of Tony Blair at Chequers, the Prime Minister's country home, at least twice since Labour won the general election last May.

Sources at News Corporation, Mr Murdoch's media company, have also confirmed that in the run-up to the election, Mr Blair was a frequent visitor to the tycoon's London home.

News of the close contacts between the two men will severely embarrass the Prime Minister, who is trying to shake off allegations that he assisted Mr Murdoch on a business deal in Italy. Until now, it has always been assumed that the high-point of Mr Blair and Mr Murdoch's association had been a trip by the then Leader of the Opposition to address a News Corporation executive conference in Australia. However, *The Independent* has learned that their contact has been more regular - raising serious questions about the propriety of Mr Blair's dealings with the magnate.

Mr Murdoch is said by News Corporation sources to have visited the Prime Minister at Chequers on two Sundays since the election. The two men were also meeting before the election, at Mr Murdoch's luxury suite in St James's in central London.

In the election campaign, Mr



Meeting place: The building where Blair met Murdoch

Murdoch went a long way towards guaranteeing Mr Blair victory when the *Sun*, his traditionally Tory-leaning paper, came out in favour of Labour.

Another Murdoch newspaper, the *Times*, admitted yesterday that Mr Blair interceded on his behalf on a recent visit to Italy. Mr Blair asked Romani Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister, what his government's reaction would be if Mr Murdoch bought a controlling interest in an Italian television group. No 10 has attempted to play down the links between the two men, initially dismissing reports of Mr Blair's assistance in Italy as a "complete joke".

The detailed allegations of the meetings were put to Downing Street last night and a spokesman for the Prime Minister said: "Our response is that we do not comment on private

meetings or conversations the Prime Minister may or may not have had."

The Prime Minister was facing a call to make a statement to the Commons and his official spokesman, Alastair Campbell, is to be summoned by a committee of MPs to be questioned about the handling of the affair, including Tory claims that denials were misleading.

The Commons Committee on Public Administration, chaired by Rhodri Morgan, a Labour MP, is expected to recommend new rules of conduct should be drawn up for Prime Ministers and their involvement with private companies when they go "batting for Britain" abroad as then Lady Thatcher with arms sales.

The Prime Minister's official spokesman last night again defended No 10 and Mr Blair.

"The whole thing is a load of old baloney," he said. "Tony Blair has met Murdoch, Montgomery, [David Montgomery, chief executive of Mirror Group newspapers] and he will be meeting with Tony O'Reilly [chairman of Independent Newspapers, owner of *The Independent*]. He has met every significant media owner in the country since the election and the majority of industrialists." Publisher HarperCollins has reached a financial settlement with its former publisher Stuart Proffitt. He left the company over its refusal to publish Chris Patten's Hong Kong book. Blair left in lunch, page 4



Cell mates: Nelson Mandela and President Bill Clinton peer through the bars of the cell that was home for the South African President during the 17 years he spent in Robben Island jail. Clinton's South Africa visit, page 15

Photograph: Rick Wilking/Reuters

## Mandela acts on 'coup plot'

By Mary Braid in Cape Town

PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela yesterday appointed three senior judges to investigate allegations of a plot to overthrow his government.

The decision, which took the country by surprise, follows the presentation of a military intelligence report to Mr Mandela endorsed by Georg Meiring, chief of the South African National Defence Force, which apparently suggested that a coup had recently been plotted.

Last night it seemed that the government was taking the possibility of a malicious motive be-

hind the report as seriously as the allegations made in it. The gravity of the situation is reflected in the heavy weight composition of the inquiry team. It will be headed by the Chief Justice, Judge Ismail Mahomed. The two other members are Judge Richard Goldstone, a member of the Constitutional Court and a UN War Crimes prosecutor, and Justice Pius Langa, deputy president of the Constitutional Court.

That the inquiry begins today in camera at a secret location is also a sign of the government's concern. The team has been ordered to report its findings as soon as possible.

The inquiry follows weeks of press speculation about the bizarre case of Robert McBride, a senior foreign affairs official and former ANC guerrilla, arrested in Mozambique with a stack of AK47s and \$11,000 in his pocket.

Mr McBride is in jail in Maputo awaiting trial for arms smuggling. Right-wing newspapers have claimed that he was working for senior members of the police and military forces, planning a coup.

But Mr McBride's wife, Paula, claims he was involved in a deep throat operation to flush out arms dealers. The security services have denied that Mr

McBride was working for them, and the government has distanced itself from claims that he was an undercover agent.

To add further complications, Mr McBride, infamous for his planting of a bomb in a Durban bar in 1986, is believed to have right wing enemies prominent in police and armed forces.

That the Mandela government may be more interested in the motives behind the report, than the allegations in it, was evident yesterday in a statement from Mr Mandela's office,

which said the inquiry would look into the "process relating to the compilation, verification and subsequent treatment of the report". A presidential aide said the inquiry would try to establish why a coup plot was spoken of - and leaked to the press - when no evidence existed to support its existence.

The government has frequently complained that senior members of the police and army have not bought into the new South Africa and are working to undermine it.



Sir Richard: In charge of national review of opera

## Eyre tipped for Covent Garden top job

By Paul Valley

SIR Richard Eyre, the former director of the National Theatre who is conducting the Government's review of opera and ballet in the capital, is being tipped to take over as artistic director of the Royal Opera House.

If speculation in the arts world is correct, the move could prove controversial because Sir Richard's report, which was commissioned by Chris Smith,

the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has not yet been completed and is not due to be published for another six weeks.

There is at this point no confirmation of the rumours which are rife in artistic circles in the wake of the resignation earlier this week of Mary Allen as chief executive of the opera house.

The Department of Culture has not been consulted on the matter, its spokeswoman said.

"We would be informed of an appointment but it's not something we'd been involved with."

A spokeswoman for the Royal Opera House said: "The post has not yet been advertised". Asked whether Sir Richard was considering applying she said: "That's something he'll have to consider when the post is advertised if he feels that is appropriate."

The appointment of Ms Allen to the job was criticised

by a Commons select committee precisely because, as secretary-general of the Arts Council, she was given the job in a backroom deal without the post being advertised.

At the Arts Council, which would have to approve the appointment, its press officer, Sue Rose, said: "They got into trouble with the process last time when they bounced Mary into the job. Everybody's speculating like mad but I can't be-

lieve they would make the same mistake again."

The Eyre report, which is due to be published early in May, is believed to recommend that the Royal Opera Company should be privatised but the Royal Ballet - which currently enjoys critical acclaim - continue to be funded by the Arts Council. The ROH building would be funded directly by government as a receiving house for the two companies.

Covent Garden, page 9

## Thousands ready to roll up for cannabis march

By Graham Ball

REPRESENTATIVES of Britain's leading drug-reform groups met last night to form a new front to fight the drug laws on the eve of the London cannabis march.

Danny Kushlick, director of the drug-policy group Transform said: "It is the first time all the different groups in Britain have agreed to combine in this way." The plan is for the new alliance to co-ordinate its activities to create maximum impact. "The three main areas of co-operation will be in lobbying MPs, building membership and working with the media," Mr Kushlick said.

The meeting, held at the Quaker International Centre in Euston, was attended by more than 50 delegates. It was held last night because so many

representatives were in London for today's *Independent on Sunday* march in favour of the decriminalisation of cannabis which begins in Hyde Park at noon and goes on to a rally at Trafalgar Square. Thousands of people are expected to attend.

"We will discuss the possibility of fielding a candidate at a forthcoming European parliamentary election," Mr Kushlick said, "and organise a series of events all over Britain in June to raise awareness of the United Nations General Assembly special session on anti-drug policies". Groups represented at last night's meeting included Transform, Release, The Green Party, the Drug Policy Review Group, the CLIC, UKCIA and the Scottish Campaign to Legalise Cannabis.

Why we march today, page 18

## Cricket is best played in dark (it might even help Atherton)

RECENT form may suggest that the former England cricket captain Mike Atherton felt he was playing in the dark, but psychologists think he might have been a better player if he really had been.

Researchers have found that catching skills can be improved significantly by practising in a blacked-out room lit only by ultra-violet light.

The catcher sees nothing but the glowing ball and is not distracted by anything else in his or her field of vision.

As a result, say the researchers, attention is focused fully on the sources of information relevant to catching.

Dr Simon Bennett, from Manchester Metropolitan University, said subjects who took part in trials in which they were thrown 30 balls from a tennis machine improved their catch success rate from six to 22 after practising for

a number of sessions in conditions of interspersed light and dark.

When they practised only in the light they could not manage more than an average of 18 catches. Catching practise held only in the dark was not as successful as that held in alternate light/dark conditions, however.

Speaking at the British Psychological Society conference in Brighton Dr Bennett said: "One explanation for this phenomenon is that in normal light there's lots of information, much of which is distracting, such as the background arm movement and things picked up in the peripheral vision."

"By removing these sources of distraction you are directing the subject to the information relevant to improving his skill."

Conference reports, page 13

### Today's news

#### Playgroup pledge

EVERY four-year-old is to have a school, nursery or playgroup place this year, the Government said. Page 7

#### Stressed MPs

NEW MPs elected last May are showing high levels of stress which may hit their capacity to do the job, according to a survey. Page 13

#### Ferman to resign

JAMES FERMAN, director of the British Board of Film Classification, is to resign at the end of the year. Page 3



Dr. J. W. Smith

IN TOMORROW'S  
INDEPENDENT  
ON SUNDAY

# A haunted life:

The Tennants may not be Britain's oldest family but they surely are its most colourful

# The Winslet girls: The new acting dynasty

IN MONDAY'S  
INDEPENDENT

# Battle of the feminists: Greer vs Jong vs Fay Weldon

# It's a jungle in here: Judy James tells us how to cope with sex in the office



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TV & radio	The Eye



Recycled paper made up  
41.4% of the raw material for  
UK newspapers in the  
first half of 1997.

# Ulster row over media manipulation

By David McKittrick  
Northern Ireland Correspondent

THE Northern Ireland Office yesterday found itself mired in an embarrassing controversy centring on a leaked government document which, critics charged, planned underhand manipulation of the media.

The document was yesterday branded by the Rev Ian Paisley as "a deceitful and filthy plan which makes Machiavelli look like a rank amateur". His critics

were echoed by the larger Ulster Unionist party, which spoke of "deception and lies."

The eight-page document was drawn up by Tom Kelly, a well-known former BBC journalist who recently became the office director of communications. Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State, denied she was embarrassed by its emergence, but she railed against civil servants who are supplying Mr Paisley with a regular flow of leaks.

Much of the document is taken up with the unexceptional mechanics of making sure ministers and others remain "on message" during the referendum campaign which will follow the emergence of agreement among the parties in the talks process.

But critics seized on a section on opinion polling which they alleged exposed clandestine media manipulation.

This stated: "It will be important to ensure that not all of

the results of opinion polling etc. will be in the public domain."

"It would be open to us to encourage some degree of public opinion polling by for example newspapers and current affairs programmes, where we believe the results are likely to be supportive."

"We have now commissioned McCann Erickson to have both quantitative and qualitative research carried out, without it being seen to be government-inspired."

It added that a database of "key movers and shakers", including churchmen and business leaders, was being drawn up, explaining.

It said: "While any overt manipulation could only be counter-productive, a carefully coordinated timetable of statements from these people will be helpful."

Nigel Dodds of the Democratic Unionist party declared: "It's a deception campaign. They're going to use taxpayers'

money, not tell people that it is taxpayer's money, and then suppress some of the information if it doesn't suit them."

Dr Mowlam responded: "I've never heard so much scabbing and rubbish in my life."

She added: "I get frustrated by the leaks, but I think as we get closer to an accommodation I will probably see more because there will be people within the civil service, like within the DUP, that don't want an agree-

ment or an accommodation found."

The Loyalist Volunteer Force yesterday threatened civil servants and prison staff in Northern Ireland.

The terror group warned that direct action would be taken against members of the Northern Ireland Office and prison staff after claiming their prisoners in the Maze Prison were not being treated in the same way as others held at the jail.



By royal appointment: The Queen during her visit to the Bridge Inn at Topsham, Devon, yesterday

Photograph: Scott Drew/Ape

# Royal first as Queen goes to the pub

THE QUEEN resisted the temptation to enjoy a lunchtime tinkle when she took a break from her busy schedule for her first-ever visit to a pub yesterday.

The visit to the 900-year-old Bridge Inn at Topsham, Devon, was arranged after palace officials spotted the Queen's page on the Internet. They were so impressed with its traditional village pub image that they contacted the landlady Caroline Cheffers-Heard and asked if they could bring the Queen.

During her visit, the Queen was presented with a bottle of special 101 ale brewed to mark the number of years

that the Cheffers-Heard family has run the pub. She was also given a crate of the ale to take home. Accepting the gift, she said she was sure her husband would enjoy it.

After the visit, Mrs Cheffers-Heard said: "I didn't offer her a drink and she didn't ask for one, but it would have been nice to have served her. It has been a great privilege to have her here."

The visit was part of the Queen's tour of the Southwest. She also visited the regional centre of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, and the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre in Lympstone.

# Beyond Her Majesty's experience

Things the Queen has never done:

- Said: "A pint of lager for me and a G&T for me mum please"
- Run for a bus
- Had an early night instead of watching the Royal Variety Performance
- Squeezed into the back row of a cinema
- Squeezed into a Tube train in the rush hour
- Eaten fish and chips from a newspaper with her fingers
- Negotiated an overdraft
- Watched the Trooping of the Colour live on television
- Rattled a stick along the railings at Buckingham Palace
- Sworn in public
- Bought a ticket for the Tube
- Cycled the wrong way up a one way street
- Started a Christmas broadcast with the word "Hello"
- Wondered what she'd do with the money if she won the lottery
- Called anyone "M'am"

# ISM: a correction

Due to a production error, the final paragraph of Boyd Tonkin's column on page 11 of today's magazine is incomplete. The paragraph should read as follows:

"When the eponymous Mr Ape (Doubleday, £9.99) is dumped by his exasperated wife, this eccentric squire packs his crumbling mansion with friendly beasts. And when his pile burns down, he joins a local gypsy and forsakes real estate, Thelma and Louise-style, they hit the road with an ancient Roller and a brand-new caravan. No doubt this gently subversive disrespect for property will outrage stars and ministers alike."

# Unilever targeted over genetic food

UNILEVER, the food giant, yesterday found itself targeted by leading green campaigners because it decided to label one of its products as containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) - foodstuffs which have been genetically engineered, writes Nicholas Schoon.

There are hundreds of products in supermarkets derived, at least in part, from GMOs and virtually none are labelled as such. This is something that the Government wants to change. Unilever announced last year that "Batchelors Beanfeast" would be first to be labelled for its GMO soy bean content. The GMO beans are widely grown in the United States, and mixed with conventional beans. Yesterday Greenpeace and

Friends of the Earth supporters protested outside a Safeway supermarket in Camden, north London, that is selling the product. One wore a Frankenstein suit, and they handed out "disloyalty" cards to shoppers.

A Unilever spokesman said yesterday: "We did what everybody was asking us to in declaring that a product has GMO contents, and then we get criticised. It's a little unfortunate."

Environmental groups are trying to persuade the public to shun GMO foods before they become ubiquitous and accepted. Adrian Bebb, food campaigner at Friends of the Earth, said: "The long term impacts of genetic engineering on farming, human health and the environment are unknown."

# Lawrence inquiry halted as police accused of lying

THE INQUIRY into the murder of Stephen Lawrence was halted yesterday after his family accused a police sergeant of lying about his actions on the night the teenager died.

Sgt Nigel Clement, a member of the Metropolitan Police Territorial Support Group, told the inquiry that he arrived at the scene in a van with other officers when Stephen was lying on the pavement, and then quickly carried out a search of the area to look for suspects.

But Stephen Kamilsh, representing the Lawrence family at the inquiry into the teenager's murder, said they did not accept that Sgt Clement arrived at the scene when he said he did.

Sgt Clement insisted he was telling the truth about the

events of the night in April 1993 when Stephen was killed in Eltham, south-east London.

Sir William Macpherson, chairman of the inquiry, adjourned proceedings because he said he was concerned that Sgt Clement was being accused of lying without being warned beforehand. According to inquiry rules, a witness must be informed of any allegation made against them before they give evidence.

Evidence from Sgt Clement and from Inspector Steven Groves, who arrived on the scene at the same time, was postponed until they have taken legal advice.

Before Sgt Clement left the witness box, he told the inquiry that when he arrived on the scene he did not see any blood

from Stephen's injuries. He also said he did not recall seeing anyone at the scene except two other police officers.

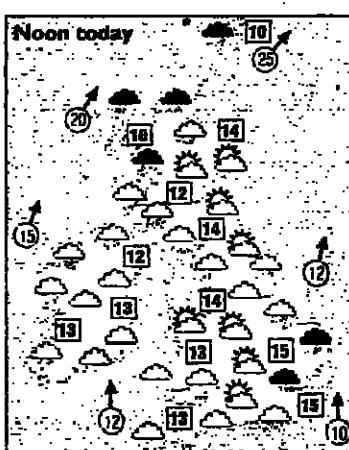
But Mr Kamilsh told him if he had been at the scene at that time he would have seen Duwayne Brooks, Stephen's friend, as well as Connor Taffie and his wife Louise.

The inquiry continued with evidence from people who had witnessed events on the night.

Helen Aviary, who was 13 at the time, told the inquiry she had not seen any police officers administering first aid to Stephen. "I felt quite shocked that the police that were there were not really doing anything," she told the inquiry.

The hearing continues on Monday.

# WEATHER



# British Isles weather

Colours: Clear, Blue; Fog, Grey; Rain, Green; Wind, Red; Snow, White; Storm, Black; Sun, Yellow; Thunder, Purple.

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
Aberdeen	9-14	SW 10-15	10-50
London	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Manchester	10-11	SW 10-15	10-50
Newcastle	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Cardiff	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Belfast	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Edinburgh	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Glasgow	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50

# Air quality

Readings: 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Manchester	10-11	SW 10-15	10-50
Newcastle	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Cardiff	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Belfast	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Edinburgh	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Glasgow	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50

# Out and about with AA Roadwatch

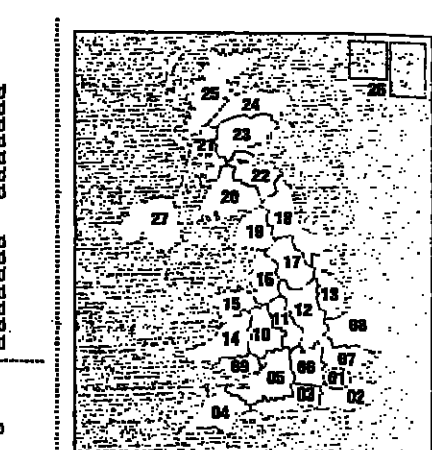
Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).



# Atlantic chart, noon today

Low 11 will move north-east and 12. Low 1 will move east and along. High 5 in slow moving.

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
New York	13-15	SW 10-15	10-50
London	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Manchester	10-11	SW 10-15	10-50
Newcastle	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Cardiff	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Belfast	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Edinburgh	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Glasgow	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50



# INDEPENDENT Weatherline

For the latest forecasts dial 0891 5889 followed by the last digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Manchester	10-11	SW 10-15	10-50
Newcastle	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Cardiff	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Belfast	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Edinburgh	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Glasgow	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50

# Lighting-up times

For the latest forecasts dial 0891 5889 followed by the last digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Manchester	10-11	SW 10-15	10-50
Newcastle	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Cardiff	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Belfast	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Edinburgh	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50
Glasgow	11-12	SW 10-15	10-50

# Sun & moon

Sun sets: 18:27. Moon sets: 05:46. Moon rises: 05:11. Moon sets: 19:04.

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# Prison boss toughs it out in 'racist' dispute

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE head of the Prison Service yesterday denied he was a racist and refused to resign following his claim that black people were more likely to die in custody while being restrained because they were physically different to whites.

Richard Tilt said: "I am not a racist. I have never been a racist. I never shall be a racist. I don't think the question of resignation comes into it. I was simply sharing with viewers the advice I had been offered. I was not giving my opinions," he said referring to the interview on Wednesday. Mark Layton, a haematologist at King's College Hospital, London, and expert on sickle-cell anaemia, backed Mr Tilt and said people with the disease were more likely to die as a result of being asphyxiated.

Nearly all sufferers of the disease are black. "Broadly speaking, he is factually correct to say that there's an increased risk". But he added that the Prison Service should take extra care to make sure no prisoners were placed at risk while being restrained.

Mr Tilt's comments follow the death of a black man, Alton Manning, in custody. An inquest jury ruled on Wednesday that he was unlawfully killed at a private jail in 1995 after he was placed in a neck lock during a struggle. Seven officers at Blakenhurst Prison, Wrexham, have been suspended while the Crown Prosecution Service considers whether to bring charges.

Mr Manning was the sixth black person out of a total of seven who have died in prisons while being restrained since

1992. Mr Tilt, trying to explain the figure, cited Prison Service research suggesting sickle-cell anaemia could be to blame. His claims were rejected by experts, including the Home Office pathologist Nat Cary.

Mr Tilt yesterday apologised if his comments had caused offence and appealed for people to look at the whole interview rather than just his comments on "positional asphyxia", in which a prisoner being restrained can suffocate - a condition allegedly exacerbated by sickle-cell anaemia, in which the sufferers' blood carries less oxygen.

"I am extremely sorry if the remarks I made on *Newsnight* have caused offence... they were completely inadvertent," he told Radio 4's *World at One*. He had been "concerned" by so many deaths involving black

prisoners and had commissioned research at that point. His aim, Mr Tilt made clear, was "reducing the risks to people when we were using physical control". The study, published on his instructions, had "suggested there was a potential link between sickle-cell disorder and these incidents".

Controversial remarks to the BBC had been "in the context of examining the whole problem and passing on the advice we had received". There was "no dispute" that there was a greater likelihood for sickle-cell disorder to occur in people of African origin, Mr Tilt said. "There is a potential risk, since sickle-cell disorder can cause death during a great deal of exertion and that is a potential problem." He was "extremely sorry" if his remarks were interpreted as racist.

## Plan row over Irvine home

COUNCIL officials yesterday visited the Scottish retreat of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, to check allegations that he carried out building work without permission.

Argyll and Bute council said a senior building control inspector and a joiner visited the property on Kintyre peninsula which Lord Irvine bought 10 years ago.

An anonymous letter to the council had alleged that work had been done to stables at Loup House, near Clachan, for which Lord Irvine did not have permission. The allegations follow a furore over the cost of refurbishing the Lord Chancellor's official apartments at Westminster.

## Four in £3m rhino horn plot

FOUR people were yesterday convicted of conspiring to sell nearly £3m-worth of rhino horn. King's Lynn Crown Court was told the plot was hatched by Wilfred Bull, 63, who is serving a life sentence for murdering his wife. Bull brought in his mistress, Carol Scotchford-Hughes, 50, and she recruited Elaine Arscott, 40, and David Eley, 54. Bull received 15 months' imprisonment concurrent to his life sentence, Eley nine months' jail, Scotchford-Hughes was ordered to do 120 hours and Arscott 80 hours of community service.

## Post strikes

Wildcat strikes by postal workers spread yesterday, disrupting mail deliveries and leading to more post-boxes being sealed.

Deliveries in Liverpool and parts of London were hit by unofficial action by more than 1,000 workers. Deliveries are also expected to be hit today despite talks being held.

In London, more postal workers walked out yesterday in two separate disputes over the suspension of three workers and a row over overtime.

## Gang jailed

AN armed gang who tried to pull off Britain's biggest cash robbery was jailed at Kingston Crown Court for a total of 43 years yesterday. The seven-strong gang's attempt to steal £6m from a security van in March last year was foiled by an undercover policeman after a suspiciously high number of raids on vans from Securitas UK's Wandsworth depot.

## Driver charged

A LORRY driver appeared in court yesterday to face charges of attempted murder, rape, and kidnapping during attacks on women in Leeds and Bradford in the early 1980s. Clive Barwell, 41, was charged at magistrates in his home city of Leeds. On Monday he was charged with similar attacks in Nottinghamshire and Leeds in 1993 and 1995.

## Plane mystery

A PLANE flying low over a road moments before a woman motorist died has been identified as an American Air Force Hercules. But the RAF insisted the plane was flying at a safe height and was not to blame for the crash in Peeblesshire in which Carol Mackenzie, a teacher, died.



Up to speed: Keith Hellawell talking to youngsters yesterday Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Youngsters ask drug tsar: Have you been a user?

By Rosa Prince

YOUNG people yesterday asked the government drug tsar Keith Hellawell whether he had ever taken drugs.

The question to Mr Hellawell and his deputy, Mike Trace, came at a consultation forum for young people at the Ministry of Sound nightclub in south London. Mr Trace, a former outreach worker with drug users, said he had partaken in the past, although he did not disclose which drugs. Mr Hellawell said he had not.

Mr Hellawell and Mr Trace were quizzed by 80 young people aged 15 to 25 who had travelled from as far away as Newcastle and Cornwall to attend the meeting, which was organised by the National Youth Agency.

Emma Gosling, a 20-year-old from Reading, said she had

used most drugs. "I think cannabis should be decriminalised and then the public should be educated before the rest are legalised," she said.

She was not confident her views would be listened to. "They ought to listen to us," she said. "We are the young people, we will be running the country in 20 years' time. Today ought to make a difference but I doubt it will."

In response to Ms Gosling's question "what gives you the right to tell me what to do", Mr Hellawell said: "I don't think you have to have had experience of drugs to do my job. If you follow that argument doctors could only treat people whose illnesses they have experienced."

Christopher Flockhart, 17, from Newark, said he did not think drugs should be legalised. "If it is for medical purposes

then I'm OK about it, but hard drugs can kill people," she said. Matt Broadbent, a 19-year-old from Brighton, asked Mr Hellawell how he justified making natural drugs, such as cannabis and magic mushrooms, illegal.

Christine Widdowfield, 23, from Middlesbrough, said she had seen friends become heroin addicts. "There should be more outreach workers," she said. "They should educate people more. I hope we will be listened to."

Mr Trace said it was important to show young people that their views were taken seriously. "When I was young nothing would reassure me that I was being listened to," he said. "In the end government is government - they are men in suits. But we don't have to do things like this. We're trying to show people we're willing to talk."

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## Nursery place for every 4-year-old

By Judith Judd  
Education Editor

EVERY four-year-old will have a school, nursery or playgroup place by this September, the Government announced yesterday. Ministers said that new plans worked out by local authorities, voluntary groups and private nurseries would provide more choice for parents.

But leaders of the playgroup movement said that the plans would mean most children were in big reception classes which were sometimes ill-equipped to cope with them, and playgroups would continue to close.

The scheme will provide 60,000 new places and involve between 300 and 400 new providers. Eighty per cent of places will be in state schools or nurseries and the rest in voluntary or private ones. Parents will be sent a list of providers and will be entitled to five two and a half-hour sessions a week at a cost of £1,100.

The money will pay for a full-time reception class place or a part-time state or private nursery place. Private nurseries will have to offer at least one free place. They will not be able to charge top-up fees for education but will be able to charge for childcare services, for example, if children are cared for early in the morning or in the evening.

A sum of £10m, announced in the budget, will be used to subsidise means-tested childcare at some nurseries. Parents will not be assured of a place at the school or nursery of their choice but ministers say that choice will be wide because, in every local authority, there are

more places than four-year-olds. Parents' options will vary according to where they live. In Middlesbrough, for instance, where most children already have state school or nursery places there will be few private or voluntary places.

Estelle Morris, the schools minister, said the new partnerships would end the destructive competition for children caused by the previous government's nursery voucher system which had driven some playgroups out of business. The Government would ensure, she said, that four-year-olds in reception classes received suitable education.

Every local authority which has four-year-olds in reception classes has had to show in its plan how their needs will be met. She acknowledged, however, that some still had some way to go. Traditionally, many reception classes have had fewer teachers per child than nursery classes and too little play space for younger children.

Margaret Lochrie, chief executive of the Pre-School Learning Alliance, said: "The Government's commitment to early years education is real but we are very concerned that most children are still going into reception classes at a time when people are asking whether five is too young to start school."

There was no sign that playgroup closures were slowing, she said. Karen Walker of the National Private Day Nurseries Association, said partnerships with local authorities were working well in some places, but said they were still concerned about the restriction of parental choice.



Waiting for Godot: Cliff Richard fans queue outside the Albert Hall in London yesterday for tickets for concerts in the autumn that go on sale tomorrow

Photograph: Philip Meech

## Councillors in porn inquiry

FOUR county councillors are under police investigation into the alleged misuse of a local authority's computers for pornography.

Shropshire County Council confirmed that West Mercia Police had executed search warrants at the homes of the four Labour councillors early on Wednesday.

A council spokesman said no one had been charged, but named three of the councillors being investigated as Peter Styles, Ken Smith and Derek Woodvine.

A West Mercia police spokesman said: "During the early hours of Wednesday police officers in Shropshire executed search warrants at four addresses in connection with an inquiry into pornography."

"A quantity of property was recovered from addresses and will now be the subject of examination."

Police said that two men have been arrested in connection with the inquiry. They were interviewed at Shrewsbury police station and released on police bail until June.

The council's Labour group leader, Malcolm Perks, said the three were named because they had been due to stand for places on council committees.

"In view of the on-going inquiries and in order to secure public confidence, the group will not be appointing them to any committee seats," Mr Perks said.

A council spokeswoman said the fourth council member had not been named because he or she was not due to stand for a committee at yesterday's annual meeting.

The decision not to name the fourth councillor could be reviewed later, she added.

The council's chief executive, Nigel Pursey, said staff had acted very quickly to bring the matter to his attention.

The authority would now be reviewing its operational guidelines for the use of computer equipment by all staff and councillors.

## Right to protect source is upheld

POLICE yesterday failed in an attempt to force a newspaper journalist to hand over details of the source of a story.

Norfolk Police asked Norwich Crown Court to force Eastern Daily Press reporter Adrian Galvin to hand over notes and other documents used for a story published last August about public funds allegedly being wasted on a four-year inquiry into allegations of corruption against three detectives. In the report Mr Galvin published the name of a police informant.

As a result of a police inquiry, two of the detectives were cleared of any wrongdoing. The third was cautioned by police for a minor breach

of disciplinary regulations and has now retired.

Judge Michael Hyam dismissed the application after a day-long hearing and ruled in favour of the Eastern Daily Press, which is based in Norwich, and Mr Galvin.

Police had argued that they needed Mr Galvin's notes to establish whether any offence under the Official Secrets Act had been committed by the person who supplied information for the story. They also argued that the report was in danger of undermining the police's informant system.

Mr Galvin and the Eastern Daily Press had argued that it was vital for sources for newspaper stories to be protected.

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# Renaissance revisited at the touch of a button

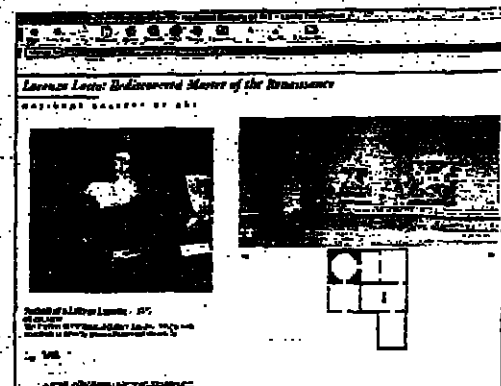
Before travelling thousands of miles to see the works of a favourite artist, check the Internet, advises Matthew Hoffman. Lorenzo Lotto may never have intended his paintings to appear on screen – but now the modern art lover is well prepared to see the real thing

Do you, like me, find yourself reading reviews of exhibitions in New York, Milan and Paris that will never come to London? Up to now, the only remedy open to those of us who could not find the time, or money, to travel to distant cities in pursuit of fleeting assemblies of works by a favourite painter or movement has been to buy the catalogue – if even that could be found, in English and affordable. The other day, however, I happened upon an imaginative development that offers some solace to the stay-at-home art lover: the virtual tour.

I had been planning a trip to Washington DC, to be taken some time this spring, for reasons unconnected with art: but having read of an exhibition of the Italian Renaissance paintings of Lorenzo Lotto that had opened at the National Gallery there, I thought I would try to catch the show as well. But when would it close? And just which works would they be exhibiting?

Lotto was a recently acquired interest of mine. In the autumn of 1996, in the Correr Museum in Venice, I had come upon a small picture by Lotto of the Virgin enthroned, a little crown held over her head by two hovering angels. And although there were many more famous paintings in the Correr, something about the little Lotto captivated me. So I kept an eye out after that for other works by him. One, in London's National Gallery, showed me that he could paint portraits with exquisite detail, and an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Antonine in the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, of two monks handing out alms to and receiving petitions from a highly realistic multitude, confirmed that he could work on a large scale as well. Then, last year, a book came out – *Lorenzo Lotto*, by Peter Humfrey, about the artist's life and works that helped feed my curiosity – and whet my appetite to see more of the paintings themselves.

What to do, then, about Washington? I turned



'A Lady with a Drawing of Lucretia' by Lorenzo Lotto, left. Above, as it appears on the Internet site.  
Photograph: The Bridgeman Art Library

to the Internet. A little poking about found the US National Gallery website, and the information that the Lotto show was due to close on 1 March. Did I want to move my trip forward? Pondering that, I idly clicked on Lotto's name, and found myself being asked whether I wished to take a "virtual tour" of the Lotto exhibition. Of course, I did.

The tour included all the rooms and all the paintings, together with some additional material (such

as some rare oriental rugs similar to those that appear in Lotto's paintings), and plenty of information. There's even a facility to hear the same sound track that is played on the audio tour available at the exhibition itself. You need a somewhat later version of the Internet web browser than I happened to be using to get the full automated tour; but there is an alternative tour in which you click your way around the walls of the rooms to get what I take to

be the same maps, close-ups of the paintings and commentary. Intriguing and informative as the site is, though, like everything on the Internet the whole setup is a little slower, and little more clumsy, than it promises.

Is there any point in seeing the show itself after such a tour in the comfort of your home or office? Well, I did go – for the last day, Sunday, 1 March. And, of course, there is nothing like the real thing.

The scale, for one, is important; you get no idea just what size the pictures are from reproductions on paper or screen, even when the measurements are given. Then there is the paint quality: the real works don't glow from behind as they do on a video screen, nor do they have the concentrated intensity of reduced versions on coated paper. To be frank, they are a little dull in comparison; but immeasurably more affecting, for all that.

My virtual tour did yield one unexpected benefit. As I approached the National Gallery, great billboard signs outside proclaimed "LOTTO", a bit as they do in New York City, where you are being bidden to play the local lottery. Inside, the hype continued: the show was subtitled "Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance" and you were told immediately and repeatedly that this great painter had been obscured by the popular acclaim accorded to Titian. In fact, Lotto is a very touching minor painter, at least by comparison with Titian, and his work is noted in every decent guide to the art of Venice.

Judging by a couple of conversations I had in Washington with others who had seen the Lotto show, they had been disappointed. But as anyone who had previously taken the Internet tour knew what to expect, presumably, like me, they were neither surprised nor disappointed to have failed to encounter the grandeur, sensuousness and cultural sophistication of another Titian. Lotto's works provide different satisfactions, not the less welcome for being in a lower register. The hype may mislead, but the virtual tour gives a truer impression of what's to be found on the walls of the gallery.

The Lotto virtual tour continues at [www.nga.gov/exhibitions/lotto.htm](http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/lotto.htm). The real thing can be seen at the Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti, Bergamo, 2 April-28 June; and the Grand Palais, Paris, 12 October-11 January 1999.

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# Everything in Garden is far from rosy



Behind the scenes: The Royal Ballet performing *Sleeping Beauty* at the Royal Opera House Photograph: Laurie Lewis

NO ONE in the arts world could quite believe it. And yet no one could refrain from repeating the gossip. The new artistic director of the Royal Opera House is to be Sir Richard Eyre, the man appointed by the Government to conduct an independent review of the sorry mess in what was once the jewel in the British arts crown.

Surely it could not be true? Sir Richard is the man who is due to report soon on the future of opera and ballet in London. Could the result be a one-man employment creation scheme - a proposal of unique self-indulgence?

Anything seemed possible yesterday in the febrile world of the metropolitan arts at the end of a week which, even by the exaggerated standards of the ROH, was extraordinary.

Covent Garden had lost yet another chief executive. Mary Allen had, after only months in the job, gone the way of her predecessor Genista McIntosh, who lasted an even shorter time. In the past 12 months the ROH has sacked many of its most senior staff, seen its chairman and board replaced and been roundly chastised by a parliamentary select committee which strongly criticised Ms Allen over the manner of her move to Covent Garden from her post as secretary-general of the Arts Council, which funds the opera house. The then Arts Council chairman, Lord Gowrie, when asked why he had not blocked the move, mysteriously told the select

## Paul Vallely reports on rumours swirling at the troubled ROH

committee that he had "bonded too closely" with the 46-year-old brunette.

The ROH was yesterday taciturn about the rumours that Sir Richard was to take over. "That's something he'll have to consider when the post is advertised if he feels that is appropriate," a spokeswoman said.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport was no more forthcoming. "It's not something we'd been involved with," said its spokeswoman, "and it's not something we'd

ness sense into the dilettante opera clique. It was he who chose Gerry Robinson, the millionaire chairman of the Granada group, and a strong supporter of new Labour, to replace Lord Gowrie as chairman of the rudderless Arts Council which had so spectacularly failed to control the elite which one commentator disparagingly christened the Covent Garden crazy gang.

The arts establishment is alarmed enough by Mr Robinson, whom it has variously dubbed a "slash-and-burn

## The man appointed to review opera and ballet in London is tipped to be Covent Garden's new artistic director

be commenting on." And at the Arts Council the response was: "It sounds like wild rumour ... or wishful thinking."

Yet it is hard to believe that Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, would not involve himself in such a decision. It was he who announced the review of the capital's opera provision without even consulting the Arts Council.

It was he who chose Sir Colin Southgate - the top man at EMI - to take over at Covent Garden to knock some busi-

ness sense into the dilettante opera clique. It was he who chose Gerry Robinson, the millionaire chairman of the Granada group, and a strong supporter of new Labour, to replace Lord Gowrie as chairman of the rudderless Arts Council which had so spectacularly failed to control the elite which one commentator disparagingly christened the Covent Garden crazy gang.

It is in such a context that the rumours about Sir Richard receive their credence. When

Ms Allen was sacked from her £100,000-a-year job, her new chairman told her he wanted not an arts administrator but an old-style artistic director. Names that have been canvassed include Brian McMaster, director of the Edinburgh Festival; Sir Simon Rattle, former chief conductor of the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; Peter Jonas of Bavarian State Opera; Gerald Mortier of the Salzburg Festival; Mark Elder, former music director at English National Opera; and Anthony Whitworth-Jones, the accountant who was until recently director of the Glyndebourne Festival. Soundings have apparently already been taken among them.

But until now no one has thought of the former director of the National Theatre, Sir Richard Eyre. His report on the future of opera and ballet in London is due at the beginning of May and it is thought likely to recommend the privatisation of the Royal Opera House with the Royal Ballet continuing to be funded by the taxpayer.

Sir Richard could not be contacted yesterday but it is worth recalling what he once said about the top job at the National. "I miss the people there, but I can't say I miss that slight tightening of the muscles around the heart every morning as I approached my office. Every day there was a crisis." It turned, he said, his hair grey. But in the modern world of opera it is, it seems, the implausible which invariably occurs.

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Right note: Helen Thorp of the Royal Academy of Music with some of the violins the Academy is exhibiting to celebrate 400 years of violin-making in Britain. The one she is holding belongs to Lord Menuhin and was made in 1722 by John Barrelet. The show opens on Tuesday Photograph: John Voos

## Casual staff win fight for equal rights at work

By Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

DESPITE a bitter five-year legal battle by National Power, Britain's casual workers were yesterday granted employment rights on a par with permanent employees.

In a highly significant test case, the Court of Appeal decided that two part-time staff who worked for the company were entitled to a contract of employment.

The decision against National Power, whose chief executive, Keith Henry, is among those utility directors denounced as "fat cats", means that thousands of casual employees working in a range of industries are now eligible for holiday and sick pay and statutory maternity leave. They will also have the right to claim unfair dismissal if they are sacked without reason.

Mr Henry's company had won the case at an industrial tribunal and an employment appeals tribunal and registered its intention to seek leave to appeal

to the House of Lords. The company's latest annual report shows that Mr Henry was paid £628,000 a year.

The two staff concerned - Heather Carmichael, 35 and Janet Leese, 36 - worked as guides at Blyth power station in Northumberland. After being refused contracts of employment and with the backing of the GMB general union, they took their case to an industrial tribunal and then an appeals tribunal, both of which decided that they did not work for the company directly.

Yesterday, however, the Court of Appeal overruled those findings and ordered a fresh industrial tribunal hearing to set down their terms of employment so that the workers can be covered by the Employment Protection Act.

Andy Freer, of the GMB's legal department, said the judges had found that it was not a "commercial reality" for the company to claim the women were not employed because it had advertised the job, given interviews and training and then offered them the work.

Mr Freer said it would be relatively simple for any casual worker who had a written job offer to establish the same rights as directly employed staff, although it would be more difficult with an oral agreement.

The two women showed parties round power stations and were paid for the number of hours they worked. Although

they had never been offered a contract of employment, they paid tax and national insurance and were provided with a uniform and the use of company vehicles.

Lord Justice Ward said the company's offer of work and the women's acceptance amounted to a "contractual relationship". Lord Justice Chadwick said the use of words "on a casual basis" in the company's letters did not negate the women's rights. Lord Justice Kennedy, dissenting from the decision, agreed with National Power that no contract had been made.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB, said that he was perplexed by Mr Henry's keenness to deprive the two women of a contract of employment. "This is the man who was paid £120,000 'disturbance' allowance for moving 30 miles to be nearer National Power's headquarters. All these two women want are basic rights. We've had three hearings on this issue and now he wants to go to the House of Lords over it. What is he on?" he said.

A spokesman for National Power said the company was surprised by yesterday's judgment and believed it had a "robust" case.

Ms Leese, of Blyth, said she was thrilled with the decision by the Court of Appeal, "not just for us, but for other people, the majority of them women, who find themselves in a similar position to us".



Old bones: Curator Andy Currant (left) with the aurochs jaw brought in by David Rayner Photograph: John Voos

## Fossil fans strut their stuff for TV roadshow

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE specimens were antique but there was no sign of Hugh Scully waiting to pounce on a Fabergé egg or enthuse over a fine example of Venetian glass. Instead, they delved into carrier bags and shoe boxes and produced pieces of dusty rock and bones for the experts to look at.

This was the Fossil Roadshow and hundreds of amateur archaeologists flocked to London's Natural History Museum to discover the origin of their finds.

Christopher Millbank, 35, from Kent, was almost collapsing under the weight of a jaw bone that he was hoping to discover was part of a woolly mammoth. "It is a passionate hobby of mine and I reckon this jaw goes back to about 10,000BC," he said.

Sadly for Mr Millbank, it turned out to be the remains of an Indian elephant which was only a few hundred years old. "I am a bit disappointed," he said bravely. "But I also brought a tooth embedded in a jaw and that really is from a woolly mammoth. It's about 40,000 years old and I found it in Whitstable so I am very pleased about that."

The roadshow was being filmed yesterday and today as part of BBC2's "evolution weekend" and there was no shortage of people eager to show off their discoveries.

William Rowlands, from Weymouth, had brought his seven-year-old grandson Mario D'Agostino to London for the day with their dinosaur footprints and Mario's collection of ammonites. "I think it's a wonderful hobby and it's great that

Mario is so interested. He wants to be an archaeologist and we decided to give him the day off school so he could bring his collection," Mr Rowlands said.

Unfortunately, Mario was so excited he was sick on the bus but he recovered sufficiently to lay out his collection and to ask searching questions about its origin.

Meanwhile, Andy Currant, curator of Ice Age mammals, was delighted to have found the jaw of an ancient aurochs (ancestor to the cow). "This is fabulous. I did not expect to see something like this," he said. "It is about 8,000 years old and in very good condition."

Its owner, David Rayner, was delighted. "I've got the whole skeleton at home which I found in Kent," he said. He was planning to return today with a 50-million-year-old crocodile head which he had found along the same stretch of coastline.

Peter Snow, the presenter of the programme, was delighted with the response to the roadshow. "People have brought things which they just found in their gardens or in quarries and they just want to know what it is and how old it is. It is part of a fascination with human life and it is wonderful to see so many people here," he said.

Only in Britain would hundreds of people travel from all over the country to learn the truth about a bit of rock. And surprisingly for such a large group of enthusiasts there was not an anorak in sight. Fossil collectors can take their specimens to the Natural History Museum between 10am and 6pm today. The Fossil Roadshow will be on BBC2 at 6.50pm today and tomorrow at 4.25pm.

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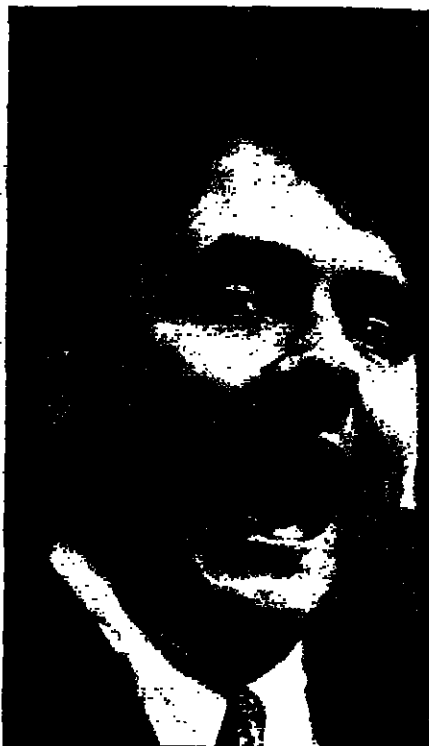
# Are they mad? Or are they simply politicians?

Jeremy Laurance  
at the British  
Psychological  
Society conference  
reports on how  
Labour members  
are feeling the  
strain of power

NEW MPs elected last May are an unhappy bunch showing high levels of stress which may damage their capacity to do the job. New Labour has brought new misery to those on the Government benches who are more worried, anxious and depressed than opposition MPs.

A survey by psychologists from Manchester University showed that the psychological health of first time MPs after the election was worse overall than that of a matched group of candidates before the election. The new MPs, who were studied last July, were more likely to be suffering from low self-esteem, fatigue and illness.

Ashley Weinberg told the British Psychological Society's annual conference in Brighton that the job of MP ought to carry a Government health



Hot seat: As a Labour MP elected in May, Stephen Twigg may be finding life stressful – something senior colleagues such as Glenda Jackson, Tony Blair, Ben Bradshaw and Gordon Brown discovered long ago

warning. He said: "It is not because we feel sorry for them. It is because MPs are the most important decision-makers in the country. It would be doing the public an injustice if we do not give them the resources or ensure they are in the best psychological health to do the job."

Mr Weinberg said that the Labour landslide meant many candidates who never expected to win found themselves with a job they did not know how to do.

Over half complained there was no induction and some did not even know their way round the Commons. "They were told

here's a desk, here's a phone, get on with it."

The euphoria of winning may have been followed by anti-climax for many candidates. Some complained of a lack of sleep and said they found it difficult to switch off and 40 per cent protested at the lack of resources. "Undoubtedly

there were individuals whose expectations had been dashed," Mr Weinberg said.

The biggest pressure on new MPs was being thrust into the spotlight, having to juggle constituency and Commons work, and having to cope with separation from home and family. The survey showed women

MPs, who were likely to have heavier home commitments, suffered more, as did those for both sexes aged 40-50.

"If you are in your forties you want to achieve something soon, your expectations are high and time is running out," said Mr Weinberg.

MPs who live between 50

and 100 miles from Westminster were coping better than those who lived closer or further away. Living closer meant greater involvement with the constituency while living further away meant longer travelling time. For MPs who had held senior positions outside the Commons, starting again at the

bottom of the ladder on the back benches could be a source of additional pressure.

Mr Weinberg cited a remark by Jack Cunningham, the Minister for Agriculture, about decisions being made by MPs in a state of "exhausted irrationality".

Leading article, page 20

## Vitamin pills fail middle class children

MIDDLE-CLASS parents who give their children vitamin supplements in the hope of boosting their intelligence are wasting their time and money. Psychologists say that the supplements, which were bought by the hopeful 10 years ago when reports appeared suggesting they could increase IQ, are only effective in children on poor diets, writes Jeremy Laurance.

Dr David Benton, of the department of psychology at Swansea University, who conducted the original study published in the *Lancet*, told the British Psychological Society conference that he was astonished by the reaction it provoked

after it was publicised on the BBC programme *QED*. "The *QED* programme succeeded in emptying the shelves of vitamins," he said. "Lorry loads were coming in from the continent to replenish them, giving the world the unfortunate impression that British children were malnourished."

His study had shown that giving a supplement of 18 vitamins and minerals to children aged 12 to 13 over eight months boosted their non-verbal intelligence – the capacity for abstract reasoning and problem solving – by nine IQ points. In nine other studies, six showed a significant effect in all or

some children. Closer analysis showed the supplements only helped children with blood levels of vitamins below 70 per cent of recommended daily allowances (RDA).

"Most children in Britain are well nourished and don't need vitamin supplements... There are a minority of children whose diet is poor enough to benefit from these supplements."

Dr Benton said there were good biological reasons why improved nutrition should boost non-verbal IQ, which is associated with larger brain size. As nutrition has improved over the last 50 years, it has been reflected in increased height,

larger brain size and rising IQ.

In a separate paper, Richard Lynn, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Ulster University, told the conference intelligence had been rising by three IQ points a decade since the Thirties. "Improved diet is far and away the most important factor. We know brain size is a determinant of intelligence and it has increased in the last 60 years because of improved nutrition."

However, he said overall genetic intelligence had been declining because people lower down the social scale tended to have larger families while professional people had smaller ones. "The genetic compo-

nent for higher intelligence is being passed on to fewer children," he said. This was reducing intelligence by one-half to two-thirds of an IQ point in each generation.

Professor Lynn was greeted by a handful of anti-Nazi protesters outside the conference who claimed his work was racist. He said that although environmental improvements in intelligence had outweighed the genetic deterioration, as nutrition improved to optimum levels it was possible that the genetic effects would result in a fall in intelligence in the future. There was no sign, however, that this had yet begun.

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## Nine years for police scam

A FORMER police officer who dishonestly obtained reward money for the return of a stolen Henry Moore sculpture and set up bribery deals to sabotage two police investigations was jailed for nine years at the Old Bailey yesterday.

Martin King, 51, had intended to use an officer for future scams "to their mutual benefit". But the officer, Detective Chief Inspector Peter Elcock, reported his approach to superior officers.

David Jeremy, for the prosecution, told the court that Det Ch Insp Elcock, who is in the Metropolitan Police, then posed as a crooked officer willing to go along with the corruption, while taping the meetings.

King, who served in the Metropolitan police from 1967 and 1971 with an "exemplary record", was arrested.

He admitted two charges of conspiring to pervert the course of justice and three charges of corruption.

During his dealings with Det Ch Insp Elcock, King told him he knew a man who had the Henry Moore statue – a bronze of a seated woman which was stolen from a gallery in London in 1996 – on which a £10,000 reward was being offered, Mr Jeremy told the court.

He then arranged to be registered as a police informer under a false name to explain how he and Elcock came to have the statue so the reward money could be obtained. He and Elcock went to Scotland Yard to collect the £10,000 and later received a further £3,000 from the police informers' fund.

But £10,000 went straight back to the sellers while £2,000 went to Mr Elcock and was returned – leaving King with £1,000, the court was told.

King also acted as a go-between in bids to sabotage two other investigations.

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# Mandela gives Clinton lesson in friendship

By Mary Braid  
in Cape Town

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton kept on smiling. But he must have been squirming as President Nelson Mandela, standing beside him, told the world South Africa would not be bullied into abandoning its Iranian, Libyan and Cuban allies, enemies of the United States.

Mr Mandela, 79, growing stiff, had to lean on Mr Clinton as they walked to the joint press conference at Tuynhuys, his Cape Town residence. But he needed no support from Mr Clinton when it came to foreign policy. Cuba's Fidel Castro and Iran's former president Hashemi Rafsanjani were among the first heads of state invited to the new South Africa, said Mr Mandela. He also invited [Muammar] Gaddafi ... because moral authority dictates that we should not abandon those who helped us in the darkest hour.

Some say Mr Mandela's great failing is blind loyalty. But yesterday he said South Africans who criticised him for it could "go jump in a pool". It was clear he felt there was room in the water for the Americans.

If Mr Clinton was looking to smooth over policy differences, Mr Mandela was working from a different script. He praised Mr

Clinton for having the "right instincts". Mr Clinton had been a friend of South Africa before he became president and his visit was the "high watermark" of the Mandela government's first term. But Mr Mandela dismissed the US's new "trade not aid" approach to Africa and the related African Growth and Opportunity Bill. Mr Clinton insists the legislation will increase African nations' access to the American economy but South Africa believes the continent's economies will suffer in the proposed new trade relationship with the rich US, and that aid will be cut.

President Clinton's pledge that a new era of equal partnership was being started between Africa and the US was tested by what appeared like a lecture. Mr Mandela turned Mr Clinton's admiration of the South African "miracle" to his advantage. The US, he said, could sit down with its enemies - as the ANC had done with the old apartheid leaders - and talk peace. "I have no doubt that the role of the United States as the world leader would be tremendously enhanced," said Mr Mandela.

Mr Clinton did not respond to Mr Mandela's lecture, preferring to praise him for the huge part he had played in the

improvements that the US claims are underway in Africa. Mr Mandela's life was one of the "truly heroic stories of the 20th century".

Despite the plain talk, the two presidents later walked arm in arm around Robben Island, where Mr Mandela spent most of his 27-year incarceration.

"This is my former home," said Mr Mandela, showing the tiny cell he occupied. "You know it was so big at the time. I don't know why it's so small now." President Clinton, more than half way through the first tour of Africa by a US president, said he thanked God Mr Mandela had survived and that his "heart had not been turned to stone".



Foreign aid: President Clinton lending President Mandela a hand yesterday on the steps at Tuynhuys, his Cape Town residence

Photograph: AFP

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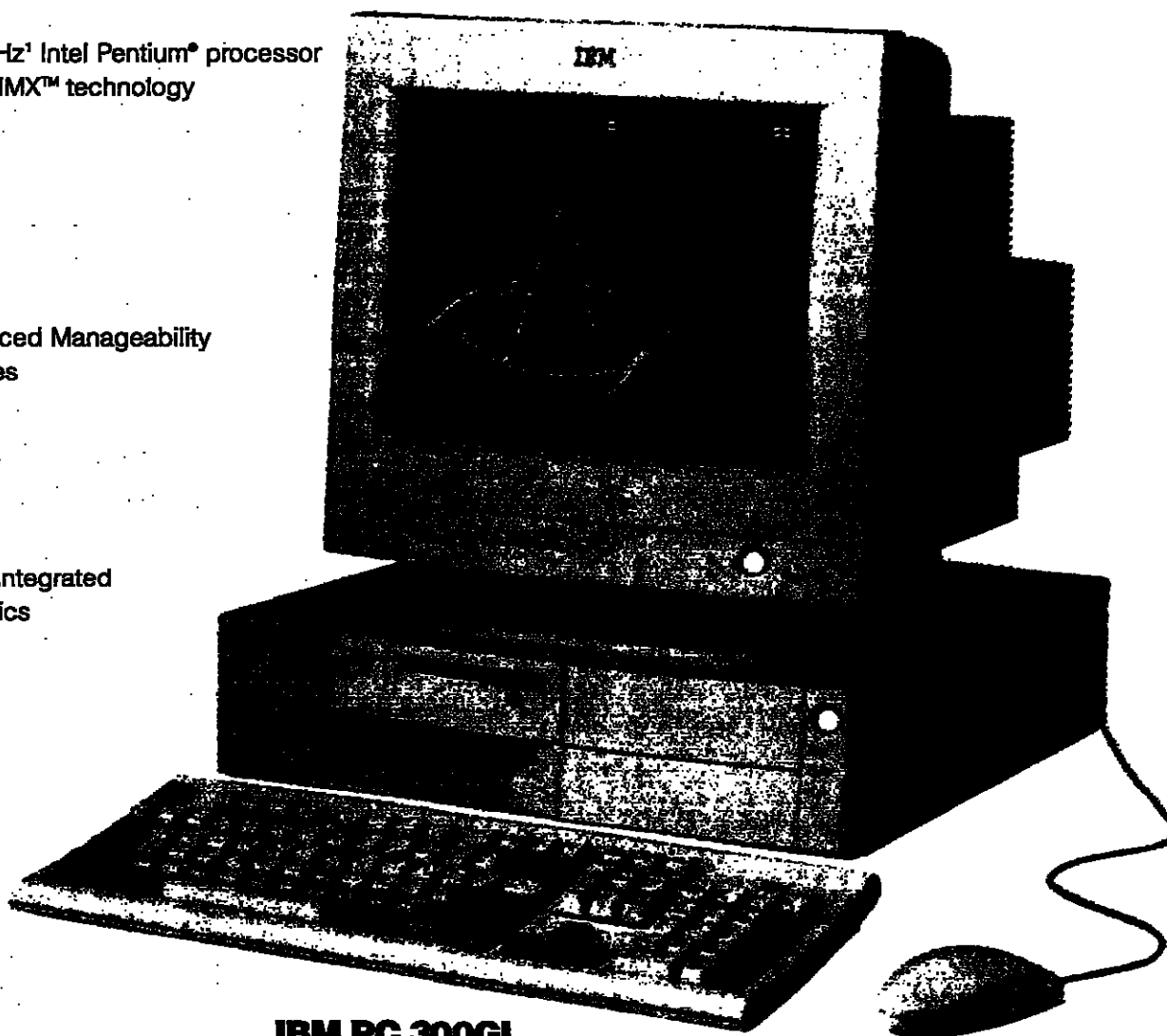
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# Fears grow for refugees in camp riots

By Richard Lloyd Parry  
in Jakarta

THE United Nations joined human rights organisations in demanding access to Malaysian detention camps yesterday after a battle between police and illegal immigrants from Indonesia on Thursday which left at least nine people dead.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees expressed concern that some of the Indonesians facing deportation might be political refugees fleeing persecution. "Yesterday we sent a letter to the Malaysian authorities expressing concern about what happened in the detention centre and again pointing out that UNHCR needed access to those people," said a spokesman in Geneva.

Amnesty International issued a statement questioning the force used by the Malaysian police and urged an independent inquiry. "The deaths of eight Indonesians in a repatriation operation in the early hours of this morning raise serious questions about the process," it said.

Eight Indonesians and one Malaysian policeman were killed in a riot at the Semenyih detention camp, 25 miles outside the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur. About 100 inmates

escaped from another nearby camp, while police used water cannon and tear gas on rioters at a third detention centre near the west coast port of Malacca.

The Indonesians were illegal immigrants from Aceh, a Muslim region on Sumatra, where separatist guerrillas are fighting for independence from Jakarta. Malaysian police moved in at dawn to deport the Acehnese, who were captured in an aggressive crackdown directed against the growing numbers of migrants who have been crossing the straits dividing Indonesia from Malaysia and Singapore.

Since the collapse of the Indonesian currency last year, hundreds of thousands of Indonesians have lost their jobs; the number is certain to continue rising. The prospect of waves of "boat people" from Indonesia is causing great alarm to its South-east Asian neighbours.

For years, the government tolerated the presence of illegal workers as they were needed to build the many ambitious construction projects marking Malaysia's growing affluence. But the country is now suffering its own economic crisis. Many of the building projects have been delayed or cancelled, and more than 17,000 illegal immigrants have been arrested since the beginning of the year.

# Father defends boy in school massacre

THE DISTRAUGHT father of one of the two boys accused of firing on classmates outside their school in Jonesboro last Tuesday, Arkansas, said yesterday that he was as perplexed as anyone about what happened and that the boy was sorry, writes David Osborne in New York.

In interviews on two television networks, Scott Johnson defended 13-year-old Mitchell. "My son is not a monster," he said. Mr Johnson, a lorry driver of Minnesota who is divorced from the boy's mother, offered condolences to the five victims - four girls and a teacher from Westside Middle School.

Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden, 11, were charged with murder on Wednesday. Funerals of two of the girls, Paige Ann Herring, 12, and Natalie Brooks, 11, were held yesterday. Struggling to contain his

emotions, Mr Johnson said, "I don't have any explanation for any of this. Nobody does." He said he had seen nothing in the boy's behaviour or state of mind that could have foretold Tuesday's events.

Mr Johnson was driving his lorry in Texas when he heard about the shooting on the radio on Tuesday. He was only reunited with his son at the hearing where the murder charges were read to the boys. Mr Johnson was allowed a few moments to hug his son. "It's the most difficult thing I've had to do," he said of that meeting. Saying that in those few moments Mitchell had shown remorse, he added: "The truth about my son is that my son is not a monster."

The funerals of the remaining three victims are scheduled to be held this weekend.

# Swiss Holocaust deal puts pressure on UK

By Louise Jury

PLANS from Swiss banks for a global settlement of claims by Holocaust survivors put pressure on the British government yesterday to make similar restitution.

The Swiss banks agreed on Thursday to negotiate the settlement after talks with Stuart Eizenstat, the American Under-Secretary of State, lawyers who have launched multi-million dollar claims against the banks and with the World Jewish Congress.

The meeting followed threats from US states and cities to boycott the banks for obstructing Holocaust survivors' efforts to recover assets placed in accounts in Switzerland before or during the Second World War. Mr Eizenstat has suggested that all the plaintiffs whose money and other assets were held by Switzerland should receive a payment from a "rough-justice fund", though the exact billion-dollar figure is still to be established.

The proposal was cautious-



Janner: Urging Whitehall to offer restitution to Jews

ly welcomed and in Britain the Holocaust Educational Trust claimed it would set a precedent which the British government should observe.

The Government is due to publish next week a report into its war-time Trading with the Enemy Act which gave Britain control over money and assets deposited in its banks by people living in Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

Some of these people were Jews who placed their valuables

in Britain because it was a safe haven, but then found it difficult to reclaim them after the war. Some died in the concentration camps, taking any proof of ownership with them and making it impossible for families to claim.

Lord Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, has called on the Government to compensate those who lost money invested in British banks in this way. He fears it will refuse. Some officials believe that the question of assets was settled in end-of-war negotiations, but Lord Janner believes the final agreements were unfair. "I hope the Government will look at what's happened over the Swiss banks and change their minds before Britain runs into a barrage of indignity."

However, there was some evidence yesterday that the settlement proposed in New York was unlikely to keep all sides happy. The Swiss Bankers' Association said it was concerned that the American local government officials had not completely lifted the threat of

sanctions against the banks. And a Jewish leader in Israel, Avraham Burg, dismissed the global offer as a public relations ploy. "The only settlement we can accept is one that we can take to the survivors," he said.

The Swiss government was at pains to point out that the three banks involved, Credit Suisse, the Union Bank of Switzerland and the Swiss Bank Corp, were acting alone. It has set up its own procedure to investigate the banks' activities, the Volcker commission, and that would continue. Accountants are studying bank accounts which have lain dormant since the war.

Alan Hevesi, the New York City financial controller who led the talks, said the participants will meet again on 24 April and he expected a final deal could be worked out within 90 days of that session. Mr Hevesi heads a panel representing 800 financial officers of state and municipal governments in the US whose potential financial might had seriously alarmed the Swiss banks.

## Porsche founder dies 48 years after his first model hit the road

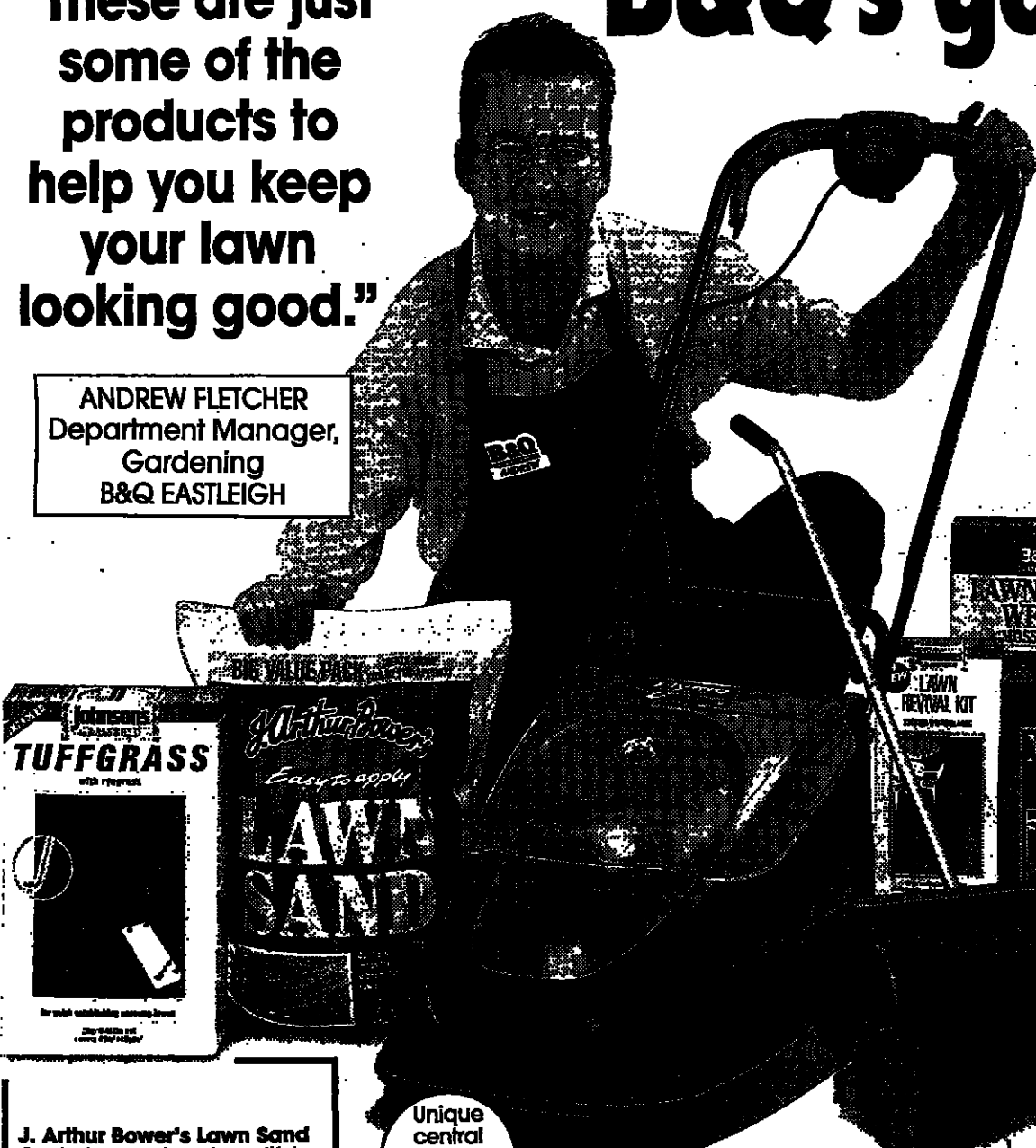


Ferdinand 'Ferry' Porsche, the founder of the German sports car marque, has died aged 88. He is pictured here with his father, also Ferdinand, in 1950 with an early 356. Ferry Porsche, born in Austria, worked in his father's Stuttgart factory, which produced the Nazi-inspired VW Beetle. Photograph: AP

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## Bordering on frustration

THE real symbol of the Middle East is not the palm tree or camel but the checkpoint. Some consist of a few armed men and a jeep beside the road. Others are more like medieval fortresses. All of them make travelling in the region a misery. I have come recently to detest the Allenby bridge crossing, which spans the Jordan on the road between Amman and Jerusalem.

A Franciscan with whom I spent hours trying to cross told me that before Israel captured the West Bank in 1967 he took an hour and a quarter to drive between the two cities; now it takes six. I have used the Allenby twice in the past month, both times coming from Amman. The first time I just missed the bus which ferries you from the last Jordanian checkpoint to the first Israeli post. I waited for another. It came after an hour but the driver disappeared for a meal. On his return he pointed out that there were only two passengers and waited another 45 minutes for more to arrive.

The second time, I just caught the bus. We crossed the Jordan. On the Israeli side the second guard post seemed unmanned. Finally we got to the main checkpoint complex. The man on the X-ray machine became suspicious of my lap-top, which was taken away for examination. Passport control was swift. But the only quick way back to Jerusalem is by Palestinian taxi and they seemed strangely absent. "They are all on strike," said a policeman. Israel had just raised the tariff they have to pay. The only alternative was a bus of elephantine slowness to Jericho, from where I got to Jerusalem five hours after I started.

WHEN I visited Yemen last year, a Briton was kidnapped by a mountain tribe as I arrived. Usually kidnappers there produce socially acceptable reasons: they want better water, roads or schools. But recently a tribe kidnapped a Chinese engineer for a unique reason. The tribe are

## JERUSALEM DIARY



Patrick Cockburn

bee-keepers. Police came to inspect their hives, during which they released the bees. The tribe wanted compensation and, to make sure that their grievance got a hearing, kidnapped the Chinese.

The government gives the impression it is all good hearted stuff and an interesting cultural tradition, like Morris dancing. Captives are generally not harmed and are invited to tribal feasts, but it is not benign as all that. The driver of a German scholar was shot dead by an armed band when they tried to kidnap her. And, despite the overt demands for better social services, the government says the pay-off is usually money and a four-wheel drive car.

I HAVE been having trouble with my computer, which has developed a fondness for the letter "N", inserting it in all possible occasions. Experts have come and gone: "There is no cure," they murmured as they took their fees. A new computer is on order, but meantime I have been phoning my copy to the *Independent*, where it is courteously and accurately recorded by the copytakers. Nevertheless, a nameless dread persists. What if I sniff while spelling the name of the head of Iraq's secret police? God knows what will appear in print. A colleague reminded of a *Guardian* critic who phoned copy from the opera house. Once he wished to describe Maria Callas in *Tosca* as sounding like "a tigress calling for her whelps", only to find the last word changed to "wheels".

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# Girls snared by the Net

They're not interested in violent computer games, says Jack O'Sullivan, but they know it's good to talk on-line

I'M being told a great adventure story by an 11 year old girl. "OK, there are these two kids exploring a cave," she explains enthusiastically. "Then the girl drops down a hole and the man has to save her. There are rats and bats and piranhas which he has to get past to reach her. And there's a detonator that you have to blow up." My narrator knows her story well, because it's a game she has played for months on her home computer. And she is proud of her abilities - the girl is always saved. But her story-telling is tinged with disappointment. "I play the man because the girl doesn't really have a role. I sometimes wish that the man got lost instead and the girl had to find him. It would be better."

The speaker is Udy Onychi, 11, from Peckham Park Primary School in south London. Her tale is typical of a medium whose technology may be a modern, but which got stuck culturally somewhere around the early James Bond films.

"It's not fair," adds Udy's friend Wumi Oni, 10. "I've got a game where this man is being attacked by crabs. If you don't shoot them, they crawl over your face and then you die."

But they should put a woman in instead of a man," Naomi Gordon, 10, nods in agreement. "It's really sad, because girls like playing girls and girls can be explorers just like boys."

So what is the games world doing to assuage this discontent? Not much. *Barbie* computer games have recently been targeted at six to eight year olds, but they are sneered at by my older interviewees. Then there is *Lara Croft*, star of *Tomb Raider*, the adventure story of a female explorer. She plays a James Bond character in a D-cup, an action Barbie babe for fevered male imaginations. (She still has more male than female players). Nonetheless, when she pulls out her M16 and Uzi to kill a few wolves, many girls are thrilled to see a heroine protecting herself with not a male rescuer in sight. New products created by Girl Games have also tried to lure girls on to computers with games such as how to win a date with your perfect guy. Additionally, a new company called Purple Moon is marketing "girls adventure" software, with plots dealing with social and emotional issues.

Yet, despite these changes, most big games manufacturers remain wedded to macho beef pest its self by date. So girls still struggle with a medium in which they are often represented as passive. They have to be extraordinarily resourceful, says Kate Baggott, a youth media analyst at the New Paradigm Learning Corporation. "Girls have to go through mental gymnastics to change the victim position of the females who are being rescued and decrease the heroic proportions of the male characters. So they'll say 'I'm sleeping, but he works for me and I'm controlling him through telepathy to get him through all those barriers.'"

So why do girls bother? For many it's just about fun - if the boy's game is the only one in town, they will play it. But for others it's almost a feminist statement, not that they would use that phrase. "We like acting boyish and independent," says Wumi. "We want to be loud and bold, instead of being girly and quiet and shy." At which point she goes into raptures about fight games. "I like where you have two different people fighting each other and you have lots of different weapons to kill with." In short, girls want to prove to the boys that they can achieve in their terms.

Some of the other girls talk about how the staple male diet of computer games often leaves them cold. Here's Ayse on car racing games: "All you do is race and go through tunnels. It's so boring."

The girls also have to fight to get time on the computer. "My brother has action man games," says Jade Whitlock-Kent, 10. "I think it's quite good, but when my brother comes back in the room he says, 'Stop, it's only for boys'. I just walk away and watch TV or do my homework." And that's the danger - that girls will just walk away. The failure of games

sioned. "My friends are less interested now than they were a few years ago. When you were younger you did things the boys did, like play football, because otherwise the boys would tease you and say you couldn't

watch a film rather than play computer games that can be very repetitive."

So is this the future - girls finally turned off computer entertainment because Barbie and Lara Croft are not interesting enough? Perhaps not. A new book, *Growing Up Digital - the Rise of the Net Generation* (McGraw-Hill) by Don Tapscott, suggests that girls are in fact poised to reverse the domination of computers by their male founders. "The computer," he says, "is changing from being a personal stand alone device for information management into becoming a communications medium, which suits girls at an earlier stage of life than boys." He is talking, in short, about on-line computers, e-mail, the internet and the capacity that comput-

ers now have for fostering co-operation and not simply competition. Once girls can have access to the Internet they will, Tapscott says, be free of the male-orientated games to which they are currently subjected.

The evidence in north America is, says Baggott, that girls are not walking away from computers, just dumping the old-style games in favour of playing on-line. But that's easy there because local telephone calls are free, making on-line gaming cheap. The moral for British parents is that if you want your daughters to be computer literate like your sons you have to make sure the girls get equal time on the terminal. And then you must swallow the cost of plugging your home computer into a telephone line.



I want my CD-Rom: Youngsters at Peckham Park Primary School in London. They look for more from computers than macho 'shoot-em-ups'

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

For your daughter to be computer literate like your son, you have to make sure girls get equal time on-line

suppliers to meet female needs runs the risk of putting them off the most important technology of the next century.

Elizabeth McGrath, 15, from Oxford is typical of how older girls become disillusioned.

do it. But when you're older you don't have to prove yourself so much like that. Also taste changes. I think my friends feel that they need more stimulation than a computer game can offer. A lot will read or

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TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT  
ON SUNDAY



This  
sporting life

Lean, mean fashion for  
the body-conscious  
Plus

■ The pirates off Penzance - are the Spanish stealing our fish?

■ Decriminalise cannabis - full coverage of today's big protest march in London

# Why we're marching today



The 'Legalise Cannabis' rally, Hyde Park 1967. Times have changed, but the law hasn't.

Photograph: MSI

TODAY, for the first time in 30 years, the streets of London will be thronged with people who want the freedom to smoke cannabis without fear of arrest.

The reason they are there is due to a campaign begun six months ago by our sister paper, the *Independent on Sunday*, which has attracted support from thousands of readers, as well as doctors, politicians, and people from the worlds of business and the arts.

The paper's editor, Rosie Boycott, opened the campaign by disregarding the hypocrisy that has traditionally surrounded this subject to write frankly about her own experiences. "I rolled my first joint on a hot June day in Hyde Park in the summer of 1968. Just 17 and desperate to be grown-up. Since my first joint, I have smoked a good many more, although I hardly smoke at all nowadays. The habit has given up on me. But I don't see why people who share my earlier enthusiasm should be branded as criminal."

"The truth is that most people I know have smoked at some time or other in their lives. They hold down jobs, bring up their families, run major companies, govern our

country, and yet, after 30 years cannabis is still officially regarded as a dangerous drug," she wrote.

Last September, the honeymoon period enjoyed by the new Labour Government was coming to a close. It had become clear by then that on the issue of drug law reform the new Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was happy to endorse the same hard-line policies of his predecessor, Michael Howard.

Rosie Boycott's decision to "out" herself struck a chord with those who had hoped for a more radical approach from new Labour. "I quickly realised that I was pushing against an open door. There are plenty of people, who like me, believe it is high time we adopted a more sensible approach to cannabis," she said this week.

Paul McCartney, Anita Roddick and Richard Branson were among the first to endorse the campaign. In the following weeks they were joined by the highest achievers from the worlds of arts and entertainment, literature, medicine, and

intellectually accomplished.

Janet Suzman, the classical actress, Labour's Ken Livingstone, Professor Colin Blakestone, Harold Pinter and Martin Amis soon followed. The support of so many celebrities encouraged readers to add their names, and to date more than 14,000 have signed; each week more join.

The campaign received its first boost last October when, surprisingly, the most senior judge in England and Wales backed calls for a public debate on the legalisation of soft drugs, including cannabis.

Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, made it clear that while he was not expressing a personal view on decriminalisation, it was an issue that merited consideration. "It is a subject that deserves, in my judgment, detached, objective, independent consideration," he said.

Many reformers saw this statement as a deliberate riposte to Jack Straw's earlier announcement not to grant a Royal Commission of Inquiry

into the working of the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act which prohibits the use of cannabis.

In the same month an opinion poll commissioned by the *IoS* revealed that 80 per cent of people wanted the current laws relaxed and that more than one third wanted the immediate decriminalisation of cannabis for recreational purposes.

In November, the medical side of the argument was significantly advanced by the British Medical Association's decision to publish an 80-page review which overturned

the old assumption that cannabis was a drug with no therapeutic benefits. Demands for doctors to be allowed to prescribe cannabis as a medicine had been growing for more than a decade. Strong anecdotal evidence had suggested it was good for treating muscle spasticity connected to Multiple Sclerosis, anorexia, some forms of epilepsy, glaucoma, asthma and hypertension.

The influential BMA urged the Government to "consider changing the Misuse of Drugs Act to allow the prescription

of cannabinoids (active chemical compounds in cannabis) to patients with certain conditions causing distress that are not adequately controlled by existing treatments."

They went further and recommended that "while research is under way, the police, the courts and other prosecuting authorities should be made aware of the medical reasons for the unlawful use of cannabis by those suffering from certain medical conditions for whom other drugs have proved ineffective."

Whilst the Government has turned a deaf ear to the report, there is evidence that the magistrates have responded.

The *IoS* campaign consistently revealed cases where individuals suffering from crippling disease had been convicted or sent to prison for using cannabis to ease their pain. Following the BMA report, some courts took a more lenient approach in line with their recommendations and issued admonishments and lighter fines to invalids in the dock.

The case for applying the criminal law to protect public health suffered another setback with the leaking of a World Health Organisation report in February. The report, that had been suppressed by officials, contained analysis by an expert panel of scientists, which determined that long-term use of cannabis was less harmful than alcohol or tobacco. The magazine *New Scientist*, which broke the story, said: "Politicians will just have to bite the bullet - cannabis will have to be decriminalised."

However, the one event to make most impact on the campaign came from the least likely source. On Saturday 13 December, a young woman bought a small amount of cannabis from a young man in a London pub. An unremarkable event, commonplace even. Except that young man with the £10 deal was William Straw, son of the more famous Jack. The issue of the 17-year-old's identity loomed over the whole of last Christmas, until early in the New

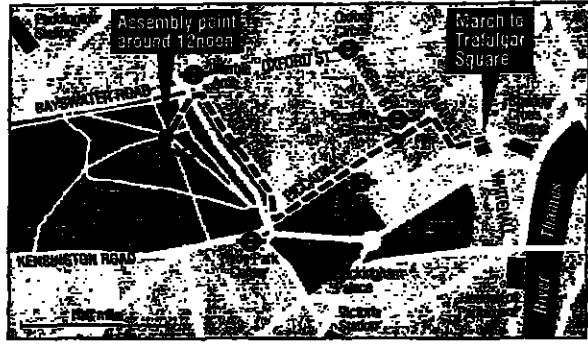
Year it was revealed that the Home Secretary had turned in his son and expected him to face the consequences.

In the end, he got off with a caution, and the woman who set the deal up, a reporter from the *Daily Mirror*, was accused of entrapment.

The incident proved embarrassing for the Government, although the Prime Minister was quick to give his minister his full support, and proved once and for all that cannabis use is more widespread than even the most fervent advocate had suspected.

And so we come to the march. After six months of debating the case in print, it was clearly time to turn words into action. Throughout the campaign, the involvement and support of readers has been vital. The passions raised by the question of cannabis decriminalisation run deep.

It was agreed that the best way to harness the energy and enthusiasm of those who have so eagerly supported the campaign was to invite them to "stand up and be counted". And by 4pm this afternoon, those who march will have earned their place in the history of the struggle to decriminalise cannabis.

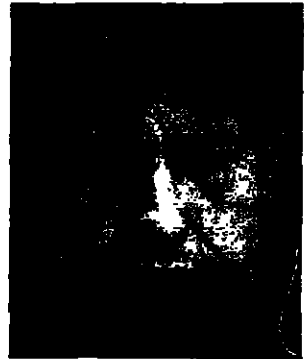


## The lines they are a changin' as pop turns into poetry

Dylan vs Keats, Cocker vs Coleridge - Jack O'Sullivan finds poets praising the lyrical virtuosity of the rock star

WILLIAM BLAKE would have had no problem with the Culture Secretary Chris Smith placing Bob Dylan alongside Keats in poetry's hall of fame as an equally talented writer. After all, Blake used to sing his "Songs of Innocence and Experience" - and Van Morrison has set several of his works to music. Nor, perhaps would Robert Burns be bothered by the Culture Secretary's rankings. "My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose" is as beautiful sung as it is recited. Go back to Homer and you find it difficult to distinguish lyricist from poet.

Yet most poets see themselves as practising a very different art from their rhythmic cousins. They are slightly appalled at attempts to place them in the same league. "When you are writing a poem, you are setting it to music at the same time," explains Don Paterson, winner of this year's TS Eliot prize. "You are trying to speak musically. In contrast, the skill of lyric writing is in leaving space for the music. Most poets are bad at that because

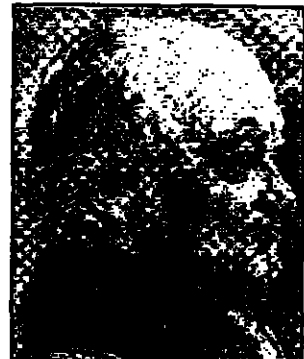


they want to fill all the parts." Michael Donaghy, the American-born poet, is more emphatic. "Robert Lowell said in 1959 of the lesser beat poets that their poetry sounded like an unscored libretto. That's how I feel about reading pop lyrics that pass themselves off as poetry. Bob Dylan is great supported by his band, his guitar and the rasp of his voice, but the effect of reading his lyrics on the page is like getting a ten minute self-indulgent electric guitar solo without the bass and drums. With Keats you get the bass and drums. Everything is



there on the page. A great poet puts it all there for you to unlock with your mind's ear." It's a division that Adrian Mitchell, the performing poet and playwright, cannot accept. He highlights the long history of poet/lyricists not only here but in Europe, notably Jacques Prevert's work for Forties' French cabaret and Brecht's lyric writing for the German theatre.

"I am against the erection of a Berlin Wall between lyrics and poetry. I am interested in what is good and bad, what is empty and what is full of gold."



Yet, regardless of this debate, poets are moved and inspired by pop lyricists. Their obliqueness is particularly valued. "I learn when they approach a problem from an odd, creative angle," says Ruth Padel, who likes singer-songwriters, such as Laurie Anderson, Tori Amos, Michelle Shocked and Tracey Chapman. That same word "oblique" crops up again with Paul Farley, the up and coming poet, whose first collection, *The Boy From the Chemist Is Here To See You* has just been published. "An oblique ap-

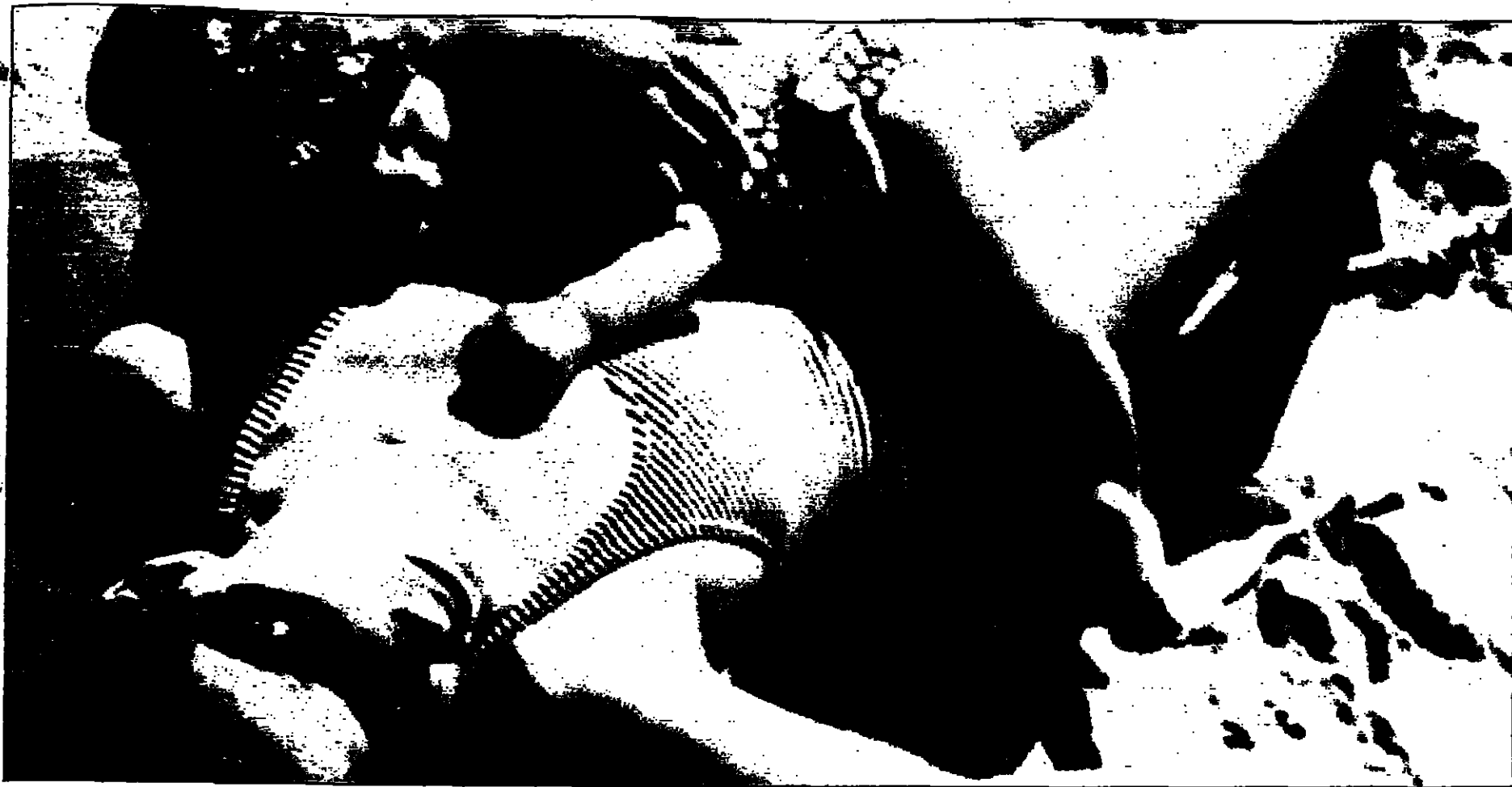


proach appeals to the poet because you have the whole concept of the word carrying great weight and the sound of it meaning more than what the word signifies." So who are the poets' favourite lyricists? The usual suspects litter their lists: Lennon, McCartney and, of course, Dylan. Jarvis Cocker, full of irony, ranks high. "Common People" is a great piece of shit stirring about middle class people slumming it," says Paul Farley, who also rates Alex Chilton from Big Star. And Elvis Costello scores con-

Word wizards: The lyrics of (from left) Bob Dylan, John Keats, William Blake and Jarvis Cocker inspire admiration across many generations

sistently high - "lyrics you can listen to again and again," says Adrian Mitchell, who is currently compiling an anthology for teenagers including works by McCartney and Chuck Berry. When asked to give his views on the great debate sparked by Chris Smith's comments, Mitchell inevitably came up with a short poem, entitled "The Hamburgerisation of Poetry":  
My wife Celia said:  
Don't say anything stupid.  
Just say: Keats and Bob Dylan  
- They both died young.





Big draw: The serie French short feature *Regarde la Mer* prompted strong reactions from audiences

# When selling out is not a sell-out

The London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival has been the most successful ever, attracting 'straight' film fans alongside its core audience. Mel Steel picks out the highlights.

"WE ALWAYS have such a dismal Christmas," says Briony Hanson, co-programmer, along with Robin Baker, of the London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival. "We do most of the programming in two bedrooms over the holidays, wading through tapes and talking on the phone, which is hardly ideal. We find what we think are some real gems, but we're really no idea of how it's all going to look projected on a big screen in front of an audience."

They needn't have worried. This year's festival has been the busiest and most successful ever, characterised by sell-out screenings, punters being turned away, and three times more press coverage than last year. Even before the final take is tallied up, it's clear that last year's 25 per cent leap on previous was no fluke.

It's a vote of confidence for potentially risky change in programming strategy. Mixed programming in the shorts selections has proved a successful and long overdue move, with many of the programmes offering queer treasures for boys, girls and everyone in between. Equally welcome has been this

year's international emphasis, particularly in the boys' camp, with a Taiwanese retrospective and offerings from Guinea, China, the Philippines and India replacing the usual US-heavy fare. The Taiwanese programme, in particular, has had a "staggering" response,

**The boys have definitely had more of a challenge and they lapped it up**

and triggered debate in the after-show discussions. "The boys have definitely had more of a challenge," says Hanson, "and they've lapped it up."

The highlights have been many. *The Man In Her Life* (Ang Laki Sa Buhay Ni Selya, Carlos Siguin-Remya, Philippines, 1997), a camp, sexy and Sirkian Filipino melodrama, is clearly destined for cult status. *Love and Death on Long Island* (Richard Kwietniowski, UK/Canada 1997), adapted from

Gilbert Adair's novel, was a last-minute addition to the programme and a big hit. Kwietniowski's first feature-length offering, a simple and beautifully-made story about an older man (John Hurt) infatuated by a younger starlet (Jason Priestley), *I Think We Do* (Brian Sloane, USA 1997), another last-minute addition, and *Broadway Damage* (Victor Mignatti, USA 1997), both independents, have also gone down well, featuring good stars and good scripts without too many challenges. And *The Hanging Garden* (Thom Fitzgerald, Canada 1997), the festival's opening night gala offering, happily managed to live up to its hype. A feel-good movie "for anyone who was ever young", it will almost certainly appeal to a straight mainstream as well as gay audience - which, let's face it, remains the marker of success in a still queer-hostile economic market.

What's been notable in the girls' department this time around is the sheer volume of lesbian dramas: 11 in total, of which only five are US imports. "There was a time," reflects Hanson, "when *Desert Hearts*, *Clare of the Moon*, and even *Go*



*Fish* had to satisfy the whole lesbian audience.

"This year we've been able to jump around a lot more, from *Slaves to the Underground* (Kristine Peterson, USA 1996), a kind of grunge-riot fantasy, to the more predictable *Entwined* (Raquel Cecilia Harrington, USA 1997)." *Entwined*, though I hate to say it, is another movie probably destined for cult status, at least among devotees of glossy, schlocky, un-

naturally-coiffed lesbian romance. Elsewhere, *Spice Girls*, a stylish, extremely popular collection of shorts, looks like providing a strong contender for the C4 TX Prize. And *Regarde la Mer* (Francois Ozon, France 1997), Hanson's own favourite feature, has drawn strong reactions from audiences as what begins as a gentle, romantic holiday video builds to an eerie, disturbing climax.

Closing act: A tale of a time-travel love affair, *The Sticky Fingers of Time*, an independent production, closed the festival

Other dyke highlights have included lesbian-at-a-bus-stop movie *Les Voleurs* (Andre Techine, France 1996), featuring Catherine Deneuve in unrequited passion for a young philosophy student; and rockumentary-with-a-difference *The Cream Will Rise* (Gigi Gaston, USA 1997), which, after a predictable beginning, metamorphoses into a transfixing and moving confessional from "omnisexual" dykon Sophie B Hawkins. The husky-voiced one also made a live guest appearance at the festival, entirely unexpected by the awed audience.

The reception for kd lang's *Live in Sydney* (Caz Gorman and Frances Dickinson, UK 1997) preview made it clear that this dykon's days aren't over yet.

Hanson was nervous about how audiences would react to the closing night offering. This was *The Sticky Fingers of Time* (Hilary Brougher, USA 1997), a time-travel movie with a twist which focuses on the relationship between Flitfus pulp fiction writer Tucker Harding and Nineties failed suicide Drew. "Lesbians can be so literal," says Hanson. "But then, they've surprised me all the way through this festival. I've been kind of inspired."

## This miscast Misanthrope needs a change of heart

AGEISM is certainly not a crime you'd want to pin on Peter Hall. Often at his productions, you wonder whether you're watching a play or a pension scheme. Alan Howard's *Lear*, for example, must have been all of five when he sired his eldest daughter, so formidably mature did she seem in the recent Hall staging. And is Felicity Kendal anybody's idea, these days, of the vivaciously careerist high-class tart Hall had her play in Feydeau's *Mind Me For Me*?

You have to applaud this director's loyalty: he seems determined, for instance, to get Dulcie Gray and Michael Denison (the F R and Queenie Leavis of showbiz) into the *Guinness Book of Records* for length of service to an insatiable public. But such is his penchant for casting out-of-kilter, generation-wise, you feel that if we were to direct a real oldies' knees-up, Kander and Ebb's *70 Girls 70*, say - it would have to be performed via a ouija board.

All of which is to say that it's very much not a first that Elaine Paige is so uncomfortably cast as Celimene in Hall's new staging of *The Misanthrope*. Imagine replacing John Malkovich with Barry Manilow in *Dangerous Liaisons* and you'll get some sense of the mismatch between Moliere's manipulative, steeled-sophisticated - and spiritually empty - coquette from the Sun King's France, and the nice, warm, down-to-earth and endlessly ordinary Ms Paige. Just about the only salon you could imagine this performer gracing is a beauty salon.

The role is vital in shaping our perception of Alceste, the title character. How can we take quite seriously his pose as the lone champion of honesty, and the snarlingly disinterested scourge of hypocrisy when he's infatuated with a woman he knows to be a walking symbol of twisted social values? Michael Pennington has the right kind of thin curdled smile and sickly superiority for Alceste, but his passion seems to stem from no lower than his throat. A satirist who cannot see

that he should, logically, be one of his own butts, this anti-hero needs to be both more tragic and more ridiculous.

Part of his problem is Paige, who is bewigged and dressed up so that she resembles what you'd get if you mated Ronnie Corbett with Danny La Rue. A femme fatale she isn't; more like an outtake from *Carry On Bitching*. But then the cast receive little support from Ranjit Bolt's couplet translation which lacks his usual sparkle (it is to Moliere what Clive James' comic verse epics are to Pope) and which relies too heavily on the outraged delight you can still cause by sticking expressions like "shit" and "piss off" in a high-toned context.

From Tony Harrison's ver-

**Paige, dressed up, looks like a cross between Ronnie Corbett and Danny La Rue**

sion, set in De Gaulle's Paris, to Martin Crimp's more recent adaptation, set amidst the media glitterati of the present day, productions of *The Misanthrope* have been keen to stress the timelessness and topicality of its war between the worldly and the unworldly, extremism and accommodation. There can be snags with this (in the modern world, if you attacked the equivalent of a crummy court versifier, you'd be met with acclaim rather than the threat of arrest). But you also risk over-reducing Moliere's cast to a collection of theatrical types when you set it in as bare and textureless a 17th-century milieu as Hall achieves here. At the start, an actor in a sun mask moons at us: by the end, you feel like returning the compliment.

Paul Taylor



Drag: Elaine Page (left) as Celimene and Anna Carteret as Arsinoe in *The Misanthrope* Geram Lewis

## THE WEEK IN THE ARTS

DAVID LISTER

IT'S 4 A.M. and you're desperate to get to sleep, but all you can hear is "We don't need no education" followed by *Dark Side of the Moon* and just as you're finally drifting off it's Atom bloody Heart Mother wailing its way up the stairs. It could drive a woman to divorce. And I regret to report it has.

For behind the exhibition by 35-year-old Steve Geary of paintings based on Pink Floyd albums, which runs until tonight at the Air Gallery in Dover Street, London, there is a sad story of marital disharmony or an inspiring story of devotion to art, depending on which way you look at it. Geary tells me that it was necessary for inspiration to have the albums playing while he worked into the early hours. His wife of seven years, Emma, who was not at the exhibition opening last Tuesday, has now separated from him.

"The Floyd was the final straw," Geary admits ruefully. "It did get fairly obsessive around the middle of last year. I was working right through the night with the music blaring. There were six weeks when I had *The Division Bell* on continuous loop. It was necessary for the work, but she couldn't sleep. You can't be a dedicated artist and run a happy marriage. Also I suppose the Floyd wasn't her

thing. But these things happen. No one is really to blame." On the contrary, that's far too magnanimous. I trust Emma will name Floyd guitarist Dave Gilmour in the divorce.

THE Arts Council has pledged to rid the fans funding system of jargon and clichés, deciding at its last meeting that communications in the arts must be more simple and effective. Well, the fight for plain English in cultural life hasn't begun very well. Immediately following that resolution by the Council it promised "the adoption of the more holistic and integrated approach to arts funding." Which we'd all support if we had a clue what it means.

WE may have scored badly at the Oscars in terms of awards, but there aren't many lessons to be learned from the Americans when it comes to acceptance speeches. Yet again they were almost without exception either cringe-making or tedious. We do things better over here.

My favourite acceptance speech of all time occurred a few years ago at The Evening Standard Drama Awards when Vanessa Redgrave broke down in tears as she thanked the stage carpenter. That takes style. Kim Basinger, eat your heart out.

## THE WEEK ON RADIO

ROBERT HANKS

TRY this one for size: the only swimming-baths in your area announces that from six till nine every morning the Olympic-size pool only attracts enthusiastic, strong swimmers. In order to get in the non-swimming public, the pool will be closed down at those times and an inflatable paddling-pool provided instead. You'd think that was pretty stupid, wouldn't you? Well, that's a pretty fair analogy for what has just happened at Radio 3 - the warm, shallow splash of water in question being Petroc Trelawny, who has this week taken over as presenter the station's daily breakfast programme, *On Air*.

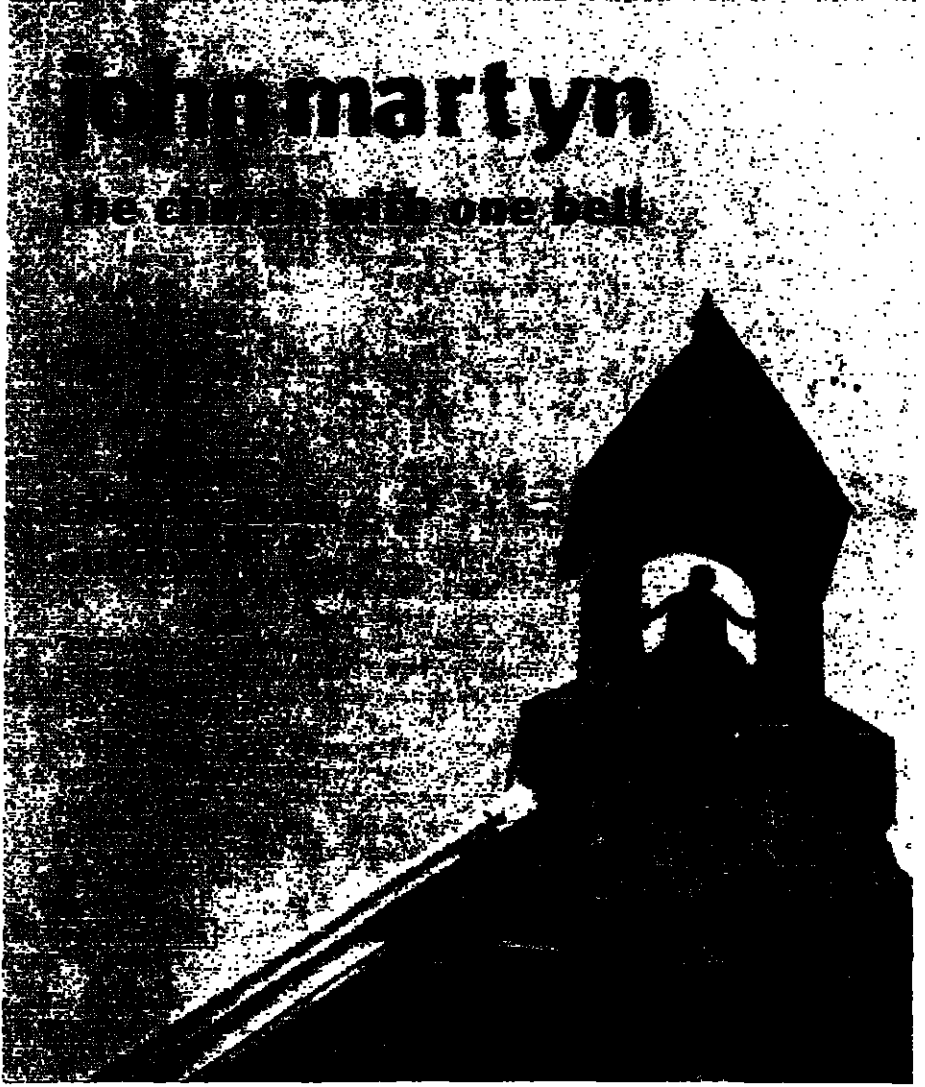
It would be nice to regale you with instances of Trelawny's idiocies but to be honest, none of them is terribly interesting or amusing; pure vacuity hardly ever is.

In any case, the issue is less how dull Trelawny is than why he takes so many opportunities to prove it. *On Air* has abandoned completely the practice of playing long spans of music in favour of snippets and fragments: one movement of Brahms's German Requiem, a quick aria from *The Creation*, a single song from the *Auvergne*, nothing more than five or six minutes long, and separated by Trelawny's flow of breezy chat. At the same time, the repertoire is being nar-

rowed - Thursday was the fourth time in a fortnight I have heard one or more of the "Songs of the Auvergne" on Radio 3.

This isn't a matter of snobbery or musical elitism, it's a matter of having the pants irritated off you. That and good programming sense. Radio 3's unique selling-point was that it played pieces of classic music in their entirety; it created an opportunity for disengagement with the conversational hurry-burly of the world outside. Now it is simply an annoying clone of Classic FM. Trying to justify its existence by upping its ratings, it is wrecking the only genuine justification it has: that it provides something the commercial sector can't.

What's bizarre is that this musical self-disembowelling has been perpetrated in the same week that Tuesday evening's concert interval was turned over to weekly hallucinatory poems by the French Symbolists and the Post-script strand was devoted to the work of a single philosopher. (Though, disappointingly, David Cook's tributes to the influence of Alasdair MacIntyre's moral treatise, *After Virtue*, ended up a nostalgic commercial for a God-fearing society.) Radio 3 clearly doesn't think its listeners are stupid; it must just think they're not very interested in music.



# THE INDEPENDENT

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## In defence of unhappiness

BEING an MP leads to higher levels of physical and emotional stress, researchers have found. Well, knock us down with a ballot paper. It is a commonplace that you have got to be pretty strange to want to be an MP and what are academic researchers for if not for dressing up the commonplace?

What Ashley Weinberg and his colleagues at Manchester University do not ask – and this is an indictment of modern academic research, because it is a far more interesting question – is do you have to be mad to rule the world?

Now, before mental health charities inundate our letters page, let us make a distinction. We understand that mental illness can be a serious matter, a tragedy for families and individuals. We are aware that much mental disorder is misunderstood, that schizophrenia is nothing to do with a split personality, that terms such as "nutter" and even "care in the community" can cause terrible offence. We know that up to one-fifth of our prison population might be classified as suffering mental health problems, and that mental illness is either symptom or cause of much avoidable suffering at all levels of society.

But it is not a frivolous speculation – at least, not wholly – to wonder whether a certain amount of psychological disturbance is not necessary for the achievement of change in society. Is there not an implication in Mr Weinberg's research that MPs should be doused in tranquilisers and sent off to health farms to relax in white towelling robes? And is this implied search for mental hygiene not, actually, unhealthy?

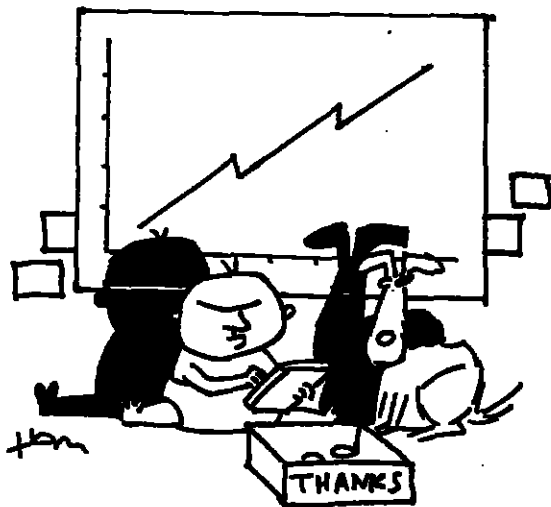
It is remarkable that, as any historian would tell you, almost all prominent figures in public life are driven characters, overcompensating for some trauma or unhappiness in their early lives. Even the Prime Minister, a balanced young man with untroubled blue eyes, was knocked sideways at the age of 11 by his father's stroke. The even more boring, but equally driven, John Major had that downward lurch to a Brixton garret at a similar age. Margaret Thatcher had that famous reticence about her mother, and became ever more markedly dogmatic in adulthood, eventually prompting Brian Walden's impertinent observation in an interview: "They think you're off your trolley."

Unhappiness is the grit in the oyster. This applies not just to MPs, but to business leaders and great artists. Some of them, at least. Many entrepreneurs had secure childhoods and their start in business handed to them on a plate. But Andy Grove, for example, the boss of Intel, the computer chip company, is a Holocaust survivor and self-confessed paranoid obsessive. He wrote a book which revealed that his hot tip was not to relax for a second, called *Only the Paranoid Survive*.

And it is a cliché that in art madness and greatness are proximate conditions. Pluck the names at random and images from the simply eccentric to the extremes of human consciousness are conjured forth. Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath, Vincent van Gogh, Syd Barrett. Of course, for each name it is possible to cite a Sir Paul McCartney or a Joseph Heller. Mr Heller, whose *Catch-22* knows a thing or two about madness, complained recently that he had a happy childhood. Don't you believe it. His father died when he was five, and the books are suffused with a sense of loss, often portraying the father-son relationship as unbearably close and yet uncommunicative.

Of course, madness is not a simple formula for success. It remains true that if someone's childhood is highly dysfunctional, the chances are that they will go off the rails and require the attentions of New Labour's curfew squads and welfare-to-work gangs.

We do not suggest that David Blunkett should amend yesterday's proposals for nursery schooling to ensure that all four-year-olds are unhappy for at least some of the time, or that Jack Straw should institute bad parenting classes.



The requirements of creativity are that the tendency to eccentricity must be bridled by at least an intermittent sense of the possible. Ambition needs to be tempered by restraint. Both are needed, and the most forceful lives are born out of a tension between the two.

This imposes a dilemma on parents: most say they would prefer their children to be happy than to be high achievers. Simone Vell's mother was once asked if she was proud of her daughter, another Holocaust survivor, distinguished minister in French governments and author of the 1975 law to allow abortion. She said she would have much preferred her to be happy.

But we do not employ MPs to be normal, satiated and contented. We employ them to get things done, to overcome the dead-weight of bureaucratic inertia and institutional sclerosis. Let us be grateful that at least some people are unhappy enough to improve the quality of life for the rest.

## Lib Dems make the difference

NOT in Inverness they don't. The 10 representatives who managed to drag themselves into the 800-seat Eden Court Theatre yesterday morning for their Scottish conference were not enough to make the difference between empty and full. This poor turnout is a pity, not just because it affords second-rate gasters the chance to re-run the one about holding their conference in a phone box. (Actually, they adjourned to an adjacent boardroom.)

It is also a shame because of the temptation it presents to dismiss the Scottish Liberal Democrats. Paddy's party north of the border has always been able to punch above its bantam weight. The choice of a proportional system for elections to the Scottish Parliament next year will, almost inevitably, grant the party's Scottish leader, Jim Wallace, the role of kingmaker between Labour and the Scottish National Party. The party might well be a partner in a coalition government.

Should he choose Labour, the way in which works will be of crucial importance to the possibility of future closer co-operation between the parties at Westminster. Will the Lib Dems realise Tony Blair's fear of proportional systems and exercise "disproportionate influence"? Or will they be the test pilots for the new progressive-radical movement for the 21st century that Mr Blair promised in his conference speech last year?

Those 10 activists have their work cut out.

### Jonesboro shootings

RATHER than simply blaming the parents, the children involved, or the guns used, for the shootings in Jonesboro, the Governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, had the courage to point out (report, 26 March) society's responsibility for incidents like this, be they at Dunblane, Fort Arthur or Jonesboro.

The value of human life has been eroded over the decades through the growth of enthusiasm, abortion, and television and computer-game violence, which all promote the killing of people who happen to be an inconvenience.

Until we as a society, and politicians, sit up and take notice of this reality, the banning of guns and other lethal weapons, and the stiffening of prison sentences for this kind of act, will deal with the symptoms, but continue to have no real impact on the causes of the problem.

ANDREW BOWDLER  
Pokhara, Nepal

HAVING studied at the University of Arkansas for three years, I strongly agreed with Rupert Cornwell's article regarding the American relationship with the gun ("The impossible dream – America without guns", 26 March).

Arkansas is a state heavily involved with hunting and gun ownership. It is seen as a rite of passage for many young Arkansians. Some college friends of mine asserted that they would not consider going for a long drive without a gun in the glove box, purely for self-defence, of course.

However, northern Arkansas is a friendly place where people leave their cars and homes unlocked. The shock of Tuesday's horrific shootings will have been profound, but its likely effect will be a call for changes to the Arkansas prosecution laws rather than a change in the gun laws that precipitated this tragedy.

HELEN GORMAN  
Nottingham

IN the wake of the horrific events in Arkansas, it once again seems as if everyone is qualified to psychoanalyse the two adolescents and understand their every motivation. This forms a convenient channel through which they can expound their own theories about the collapse of society.

Despite the fact that dozens of studies have shown no quantifiable link between screen violence and real-life crime, David Osborne (report, 27 March) still assumes that videos have a comparable influence to that of the boys' fathers, who have spent years training them to fire semi-automatic weapons at other living creatures.

DANIEL SMITH  
Aberdeen

### Heseltine on Blackpool

NEITHER Paul Routledge nor David Walker, debating the pros and cons of Blackpool as the place to hold a party conference ("Is Labour right to end its affair with Blackpool?", 26 March), got to the heart of the matter. Michael Heseltine did.

When asked by Melvyn Bragg on the BBC in 1988 to compare the late 19th-century Winter Gardens, Blackpool, with the faceless modern conference centres of Brighton and Bournemouth, Heseltine opined:

I would say at once that if I have a choice of venue it is the Winter Gardens, Blackpool. There is nothing like it: the feeling of the audience in that building, tiered up there, towering over you. Whereas in these new buildings, the ball, the carpeting and the chairs, it's all been toned down to remove any excess of language or of tone. You have to fight, really fight to try and get through to the audience. The Winter Gardens, it's there with you.

A seasoned actor might say the same, comparing a fine old Matcham auditorium and many a rational new theatre with perfect sightlines and empty air. Heseltine, a fine performer himself, might have concluded that, at the Winter Gardens, any good orator can address the conference, while at Brighton or Bournemouth, the halls are more suited to orchestrated rallies of the faithful. Or is that what New Labour wants?

IAN MACINTOSH  
Theatre Projects Consultants  
London NW5

## LETTER from THE EDITOR

TODAY, I shall be out on the streets of central London marching for a cause I believe in. While at the *Independent on Sunday*, I decided to launch a campaign for the decriminalisation of cannabis – not heroin, cocaine, or other hard drugs but pot, which has very few harmful side effects and even better, can alleviate the suffering of multiple sclerosis sufferers. At noon today, MS groups will join me, MPs, MEPs and supporters of our campaign as we head off from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square. It will be an intensely exciting occasion, one that marks a high-point in our six-month effort. But there is still much work to be done – while studies released by the World Health Organisation and British Medical Association point to the relatively benign effects of cannabis versus other drugs, most notably alcohol, and many public figures from the media, medicine, science, the arts, even the police have voiced their support, the Government refuses to budge.

That is why we are marching today, and, hopefully, at last, Tony Blair and Jack Straw will listen and understand this is one campaign that is not going to go away.

THIS week, *The Independent* invited the main party leaders to sign up to the Prime Minister's powerful statement attacking racism which he delivered in Southwark 10 days ago. Here at

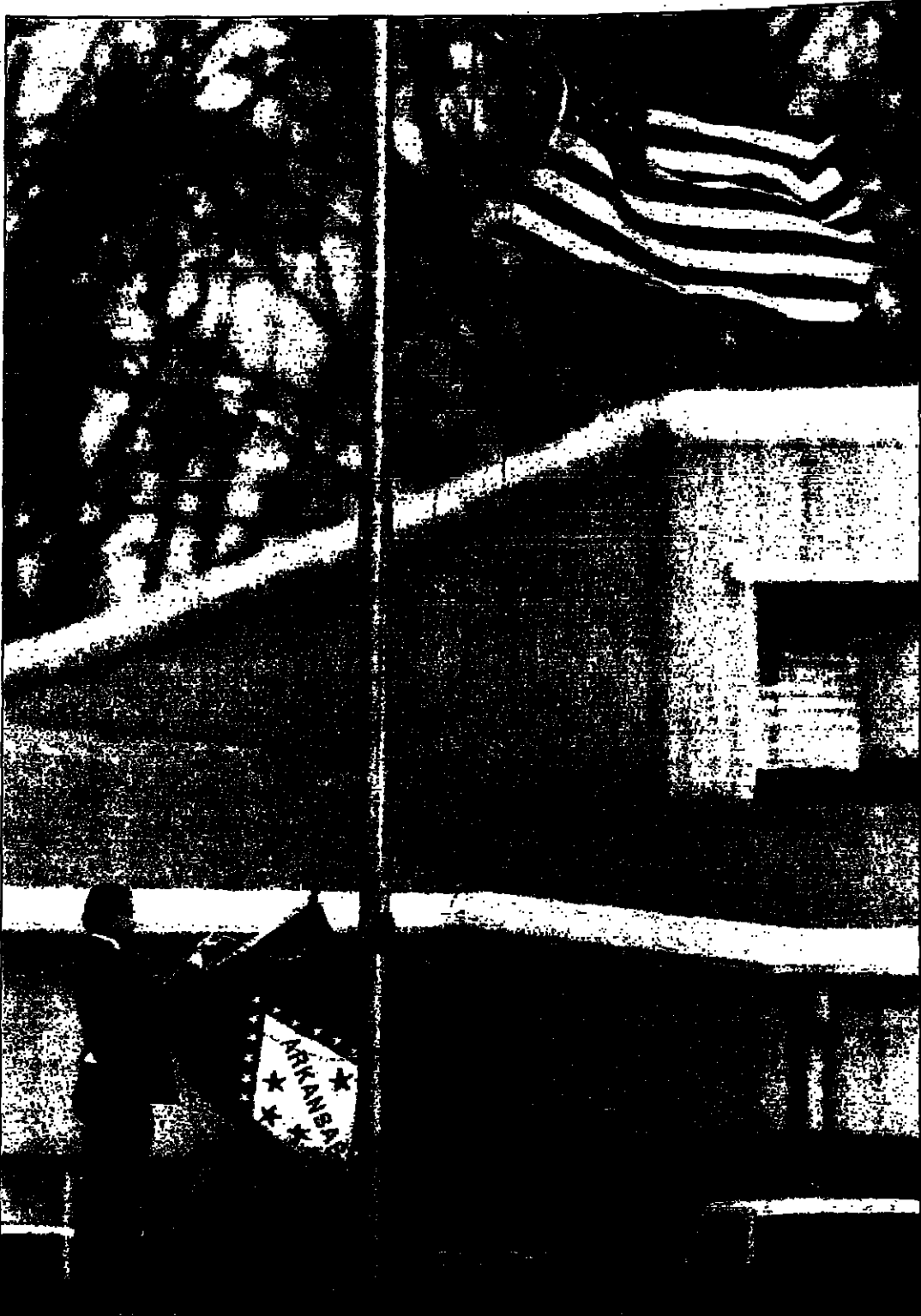
*The Independent* we applauded his sentiments. So too did William Hague and Paddy Ashdown, who echoed his views. As our political editor, Anthony Bevis, wrote in the paper on Wednesday, racism is endemic in our society. Barely had Tony written this than the Director-General of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, said that Afro-Caribbean people were more prone to suffer "positional asphyxia" than white people. There were "physiological differences as well," he added. Mr Tilt did at least admit that there was racism in the Prison Service, but attitudes like his – which reminded me of the Bell Curve controversy in America – show how urgent the party leaders' commitment truly is. As a newspaper, *The Independent* has always stood firmly behind its belief in racial, cultural and sexual freedom for all. But we can never be complacent. As Mr Hague said, "more needs to be done to bring down the barriers of ignorance and mistrust which still exist in parts of our society."

SO, Canadian teenagers have gone wild for Prince William. Ten thousand hysterical girls turned out to see him as "Willie Mania" swept through Vancouver. In my teenage daughter's life, William's reign as the king of pin-ups lasted for only a part of the autumn term following Diana's death. It ended abruptly with the arrival of Leonardo DiCaprio, star of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Titanic* and now *The Man In The Iron Mask*. William,

as far as my daughter is concerned, is history. She is, however, disgusted by her mother's poor judgement: three years ago, while I was editing *Esquire*, I went to a party at Giorgio Armani's. As I sat down to eat, a young man flopped into the seat beside me. His name was Leonardo DiCaprio. His blond hair was hanging over his eyebrows, his jeans and trainers decidedly scruffy. "Put me on the cover of your magazine, I'm going to be the most famous actor in the world within three years." At that point his fame was limited to his (totally brilliant) performance in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. I didn't put him on the cover. My daughter cannot believe it.

LAST Monday, the *Independent* reporter Steve Goodwin set off to climb Everest. The office clapped as he departed for his flight from London to Kathmandu. As someone who read Jon Krakauer's extraordinary account of climbing Everest, *Into Thin Air*, when it first appeared as an extract in America's *Outside* magazine, I am moved and impressed by Steve's guts. Technology (solar panels, satellite phones, digital cameras) permitting, you'll be able to follow the ascent day by day in the pages of *The Independent* over the next 10 weeks. He has our very best wishes.

ROSIE BOYCOTT



The US flag flies at half-mast at Westside School, Jonesboro: four pupils and a teacher were killed in shootings earlier this week  
Photograph: Reuters

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number  
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

### Why we need lobbyists

IT IS implicitly assumed in your article "Revealed: Labour's links with lobbyists" (24 March) that political consultancies are detrimental to a well-functioning democracy.

Companies using political consultancies do not buy influence – they buy knowledge (of the arcane political processes) and skills (in manoeuvring one's way through them). Unless and until the Modernisation Select Committee makes Parliamentary procedure less a series of ritual rituals and more a transparent and

effective legislative machine, then lobbyists will always have a valid and necessary role to play in the UK. At the very least they are a necessary evil.  
RICHARD MOLLET  
Ludgate Communications  
London EC1

### Modified tomatoes

ZENECA has given evidence to the Government's advisory committee on genetic modification that "the intense heat used in peeling and then sterilising GMO tomatoes kills any seeds and effectively destroys the an-

tibiotic resistance" (19 March).

Heat will certainly kill a living plant but will it really destroy the kanamycin resistance genes inserted into every cell of these fruits? DNA is tough stuff and is very resistant to heat degradation – life wouldn't have been around so long if the substance which makes it happen fell to bits so easily.

I would like to be more certain that the Government's advisory committee is requiring independent validation of the unlikely evidence submitted by Zeneca.  
JOANNA CLARKE  
Glasgow

### QUOTE UNQUOTE

"We want to rear a nation of taxpayers and to make tax a part of our culture. We promise sizzling storylines with murder, financial scams and, of course, sex." – Yuri Medvedev, Russia's tax office spokesman discussing a new TV show designed to persuade people to pay tax.

"The New Conservative rank and file is made up in large part of hard-hearted Essex businessmen, second-rate academics and opinionated young unemployed." – Auberon Waugh, TV pundit and commentator.

"It's cool to be 40. It really is a new life. I'm happy that I am sure there's a team of psychiatrists out there somewhere who would disagree with me." – Sharon Stone, actress.

"Sometimes I get the church and the movie theatre confused. That's what I told the Dalai Lama the first time I met him." – Martin Scorsese, film director.



"Thank you my dear, but really, you know, you should have served Mrs Callaghan first." – Lord Callaghan, when prime minister, to a young waitress who tipped an entire sizzling leg of lamb into his lap.

"She should get the Oscar for best bust. Anyone who those floaters doesn't need a lifeboat." – Camille Paglia, feminist and academic, discussing actress Kate Winslet, star of *Titanic*.

### Marketing Diana

THE Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund may be in danger of squandering its greatest asset through the lack of an intelligent marketing strategy (report, 25 March). Brand marketing, of "names", is highly sophisticated and sound precedents exist which it would be perilous to ignore.

Consumer decisions are based on perceptions of status, style, performance and price, any one of which will dominate in any one spending decision. It is impossible to be all things to all men and women and broad-spectrum marketing is rarely viable beyond domestic consumables.

The retained images of Diana: of an elegant beauty, of a deeply caring human being who overcame huge personal problems to bring hope to others, are the vital asset in the trust of the Memorial Fund. It must understand its real potential and act accordingly. The price of failure will be a nine-day wonder which will do no-one, particularly the fund beneficiaries, any good.

JOHN A DUNNING  
Camberley, Surrey

### One's better than ever

AS A commercial driver I, like Pierre Perrone ("One FM: singularly unsensational", 25 March), hear radio all over the UK, and my view is that Radio One is one of the very best reasons to pay a licence fee. Without their freedom to play just about anything they want, that frequency too would sound like the unchallenging blandness which is 97 per cent of commercial radio.

Without Radio One's commitment to break new music (that doesn't mean they can never play anything familiar, Pierre) there would be no Cornershop, Space, Verve, Run DMC, Nevis, All Seeing I etc for unadventurous commercial stations to plagiarise and play to death. To me, Radio One sounds better than it ever has. Would any commercial station in the UK allow the experimentation of Chris Morris or the cheek of Chris Moyles or the "northernness" of Mark and Lard? Not unless it was made safer by Radio One doing it first.

STEPHANIE WILKINSON  
Manchester

FORTUNATELY, your claim (in the News, 27 March) that Chris Morris's rude subliminal message to Michael Grade could only have been seen by someone with industry-standard editing equipment is wrong. A video of the programme and a little patience are all you need to enjoy this very satisfying media moment.

JOE FATTORINI  
Glasgow

### Motor neurone disease

REGARDING the report by Sally Staples ("The woman who fought a hidden killer", 20 March), we are concerned to correct the impression that people with MND will die from choking or through suffocation. In our experience, death is usually as a result of respiratory failure and with the right palliative care, is pain-free and peaceful. Annie Lindell, the woman featured in the article, who died last December, did in fact die peacefully.

LAURA SIMONS  
Head of Communications  
Motor Neurone Disease Association  
Northampton

### 'Racist' prison chief

THE assertion by Richard Tilt, head of the Prison Service, that, for genetic reasons, black people are more liable than whites to die when in a neck lock (report, 27 March), is to be welcomed. This must mean that instructions have already gone out to everyone in the Prison Service that anyone putting a black person in a neck lock may face charges of attempted murder.

I hope that, when the matter is put to a scientific test, the excellent Mr Tilt will not be one of the strong-necked whites used as controls.  
Professor CR LEEDHAM-GREEN  
Woodford Green, Essex



## Secrets the ancient Egyptians had hoped to keep to themselves



DAVID  
AARONOVITCH  
UNEXPECTED USES FOR  
MUMMIFIED DNA

Old Seti II is not much to look at (though his admirers are keen to point out that he's borne up better than Senosert IV). His skin is black and desiccated, his teeth are cracked, his genitals are no more than a shrivelled flap between his sick-like thighs, and his hand has an unpleasant habit of working itself loose, and sliding over his shrunken chest, to the bottom of his box. So, despite the fact that he's remarkably well-preserved for a 3,000-year-old, you wouldn't expect him to be of use to anyone now. No point in asking him the way to the feluccas.

Actually, that's not true. Perhaps ten years ago we might not have counted on getting very much out of an Egyptian mummy (unless we were superstitious), but now we are a nation of cadaverophiles. Poking dead bodies and interrogating their mute remains, has become something of an obsession. We're all at it. That artist bloke (the one with the posh name accused of purloining body parts, casting them in metal and then hiding the originals inside tupperware boxes in the flats of unsuspecting girl-friends) was just the tip of the iceberg.

TV factual shows, such as *Time Team*, *Shadows of Our Ancestors* and *Ice Mummies*, and fictional pathologist-as-sexy-hero ones (you know: "Let's take a look at the brain." "Orrghhh!" "It's his first time, Dr Skinner"), such as *Silent Witness* and *McCallum*, testify to our fascination with the dead. Like those weird Madagascan "relative retrieval" rituals, you hardly have time to bury your relatives these days, before some academic or arty type wants to dig them up again, and reconstruct them.

Because, of course, there is so much to find out! A recent edition of the *Journal of the Autonomic Nervous System* (*de rigueur* in our household since the Murdoch and China business disillusioned us with the *Times*) - vol 67, p 105, to be exact - reported on the findings of a team looking at the neurotransmitters of the long embalmed. They took nerves from the ankles

of number of Egyptian mummies who kicked the earthware sometime between 500 and 2000 BC, and a teasing little sample from just one Peruvian mummy of slightly more recent origin.

These enterprising palaeo-neurobiologists sliced up the nerves, embedded them in wax, and then (but, of course, you know all this) incubated them with antibodies. Their findings were both dramatic and incomprehensible. Suffice it to say that Professor Otto Appenzeller concluded that, in the near future, we would be able to discover all kinds of things about the people of the past that we do not now know.

Then, just this week, came the story of how the custodians of Manchester University's Egyptian Mummy Tissue Bank have written to thousands of institutions worldwide asking for a lend of their corpses. Dr Rosalie David told the BBC *Today* programme that the technique was to "go in with industrial endoscopes through existing bodily holes". There's a charming discretion here, as though Dr David wished to reassure us that she for one, would never be party to making new holes in old bodies.

Anyway, she was hoping, she continued, to be able to tell what diseases the mummies had suffered from, what they looked like (eye colour, etc.) and - with the help of DNA - which other mummies they were related to.

At the moment, of course, all we have to go on is all those heroic murals and stelae, depicting vigorous Pharaohs smiting their enemies or communing with a series of improbable gods. There is a timeless tendency for important figures to present themselves in an impossibly good light in public. When was the last time, for instance, that a party leader, mid-Dimbleby, let loose a loud fart? And yet we presume that pockets of wind travel the intestines of the famous, as they do ours.

This is intriguing. Was Nefertiti a natural blonde? Or perhaps Tutankhamun was a drying-out alcoholic. Imagine our pleasure when it is proved that Amenhotep III (the model, you will remember, for the Colossi of Memnon at Thebes), was three-foot tall, syphilitic, suffered from chronic haemorrhoids and had feet covered in verrucae.

And - if sex addiction could be traced - all those bad-tempered attacks on various Libyans, Nubians, Sea-Peoples, Hittites, Philistines and Hebrews by Ramesses the Great might be explained by a need to divert attention away from various palace entanglements with the Iron Age precursors of Monica Lewinsky and Paula Jones. The principle - "he that has been smitten must himself smite" may be older than we thought.

My own favourite conjecture is that, in Shelley's vast and trackless desert, an Egyptian king with a slight speech impediment had caused to be carved in stone the legend: "My name is Othymandath, king of kings, gathe on my worth ye mortals and deipair."

There is, in all this, a wonderful irony. Thousands of years ago, a static and superstitious ruling class had the bodies of their kings and priests eviscerated, their skins elaborately prepared by the application of unspeakable unguents, wrapped in bandages, shoved inside a wooden box, then a stone sarcophagus, and finally placed in a hidden tomb - all in the absurd belief that, somehow, the mummified individual would one day live again. And the bugger of it is, of course, that it worked.

## Everyone may think it's cool to be black, but it's really hard work



TREVOR  
PHILLIPS

WANTING TO  
BE DIFFERENT

So you wannabeblack? Since this is one of the few areas in which I can claim to be an expert let me give you a few tips before you finally make up your mind.

Quentin Tarantino says that he feels black inside, and wishes that the colour of his skin matched that of his soul. I heard that Steven Spielberg, who has adopted black children, feels a kinship with the brethren that is closer than friendship. And, I saw the Princes William and Charles putting their caps on backwards and giving the "Yo, dude" sign. I know that William Hague has been virtually one of us since Carnival last year, and in this week's party political broadcast there was a suspiciously high melanin count. This is very serious, people: the fact that it is Hollywood leading the charge means that even now there is at least one clinic working on the melanin-reinforcement treatment that will give the stars what they want.

I would be the last to argue against people knowing about and trying out elements of each other's cultures. That's healthy. It is also the way of the world today; we can all travel wherever we want, and we can, happily, discover new ways of living. In particular, the growth of cities means that most of humanity can find somewhere away from their ancestral village, where no-one knows them, and where they can, in part, reinvent their lives. This is why cities like New York and London are an earthly approximation of Heaven; if we make it there we can be forgiven all our past sins. But I draw the line at physically wanting to turn into something else. For goodness' sake, what if you get it wrong? There may be no going back. It may be fine to be a Tory one year and a New Labourite the next, but who can tell the difference anyway? Changing your race is something else altogether. Take the sad case of the self-styled King of Pop.

For more than two decades Michael Jackson has been changing from black to white, and whether the reason is a nat-



Yo dude: wear that cap backwards and join the brothers

AP

ural physical condition or an unnatural mental one, he has in his music tried to make a virtue out of the change, by celebrating the commonality of all races. It must be bewildering for him to find everyone heading in the opposite direction. If I were Wacko, I'd be gutted.

The sons and daughters of Africa are emerging as the most desirable role models in the world, whether mixed with other genes or not. Who would not want to possess the unmodified beauty of Halle Berry or Naomi Campbell; to carry the gravitas of General Colin Powell or the saintliness of Nelson Mandela; to enjoy the athletic success of Magic Johnson or Tiger Woods; to feel the ferocity of a Mike Tyson or the sheer mischief of Ian Wright? These are the heroes of our time. And this influence is not just limited to performers: the black pre-eminence is stretching into the arena of basic moral values. For two decades, the most significant poet-philosopher in the world was called Muhammad Ali; and today the queen of western mores, able to call kings and presidents to account is Miss Oprah Winfrey.

It used to be the case that it was just a few beatniks who wanted to shed their colour and

culture and become alcoholic jazz musicians; in more recent times, Bob Marley's glamour brought a posse of doped-up white rastafarians into being, christened affectionately "wiggas". These were people who wanted to escape from dull, predictable lives, and they would have been the same were they black, white or anything else. But now, though the global culture's icons are many-hued and racially diverse, one can't help but think that Africa is out there leading the pack.

The problem is that, as always, things aren't exactly, as they look; and it behoves a preacher - for that is what we columnists really are - to warn his flock of the pitfalls that lie ahead. Let's start with the most mundane of tasks: did you think twice before you last tied your tie? No you probably didn't. But if you're a black man you may now start to have worries about accidentally asphyxiating yourself, since no less an authority than Richard Tilt, the Director of the Prison Service has kindly pointed out that you are susceptible to being accidentally choked. It may of course be that Richard Tilt himself has some black genes; his remarks sound like the thoughts of someone who had suffered a sudden interruption

of the flow of oxygen to his brain. If you are a woman, there is unfortunately an equivalent problem. If you want to see a black woman cry, discuss the hair problem. Natural or pressed? Perned or straight? What strength of conditioner? And have you ever noticed the attention that black women pay to the weather forecast? That is because being caught in a rain shower with straightened hair is the equivalent to being dropped in the village pond; you look and feel ridiculous and no amount of poise and dignity will stop that hair curling back to its original state. Do not be fooled by Naomi. She makes it look easy, but every follicle has taken years of pain and hours of grooming to reach the shiny-soft nirvana, and to carry that special heavy swing that comes from a full head of African hair.

I need not, I hope, repeat points made here before about the difficulty of finding appropriate makeup for black skin. Then there is the responsibility of being funky all the time. Europeans, being totally dysfunctional cannot grasp just how much effort goes into being hip. You have to learn a language that is constantly being refreshed so that nobody else understands it; every time "they" learn the meaning of words like "wicked" and "24.7" we have to stop using them and invent something new. Otherwise no-one believes that you're black, and people say cruel things like "You're just like us, really".

Another variety of this -

males only - is the desirability of being edgy and dangerous. Most of my black contemporaries have spent years perfecting that mean, moody look that says "Don't mess with me"; it's an art form, but like all art, it takes its toll. You cannot watch *Blind Date* or *Friends* and look mean and moody at the same time. It is an impossibility; so you end up missing the fun, or else being thought "not very black" (a curious expression, but one that people use all the time about someone who doesn't quite fit their idea of what a black person should be like).

And finally there is the biggest problem about being black: once you've started, you can't stop. This is a one-way ticket. And on this journey, if you want to join the club, you carry all the baggage, you may be a chic black woman, but with the image comes an age-old suggestion of availability. The more accomplished you may be in athletics the more the picture posters paint you as a bear of little brain. The more you scum streetwise, the stronger the odour of criminality. And of course it is precisely the whisper of danger that attracts people who otherwise would live nice safe non-black lives. The wannabeblax are playing with fire. That's their business, but they do need to look deep into the flames and work out what it is they are getting themselves into. Be careful, boys and girls; you never know what you might turn into.

## How to succeed by stating the obvious



GLEND  
COOPER

PACKAGING  
COMMON  
SENSE

DID you know that anorexics feel that eating is the one part of their life that they can control? Or that new MPs thrust into the spotlight feel more stressed? Or that vitamin supplements don't increase intelligence?

Yes, so did I. This weekend the British Psychological Society holds its annual conference in Brighton, and among the genuine insights it throws up there are always a large amount of studies (of which the three listed above are examples) which contain the blindingly obvious. In the past we have been told that women still go for handsome rich men; that men like young babes; and that teenage girls on diets get more miserable as time goes on, particularly if they don't seem to be achieving their goal weight.

I always come away from such conferences with a strong desire to throw in journalism and get a fat psychological grant for a study to see if north London twenty-something women experienced more positive feelings and less neuroses in the Caribbean than in Kilburn, a study I am of course willing to participate in myself.

You note that I say positive feelings. If I submitted a proposal saying that I wanted to see if women have a laugh in Barbados I wouldn't be playing the game. For a big part of stating

the obvious is wrapping it up in jargon.

Last year Dr Peter Todd, of the Max Planck Institute in Munich, said that we choose our life partners by utilising the 37 per cent rule. What that means in English is that by the time we've gone through 37 per cent of potential partners we know what we're looking for and pick the next person who matches that. Got that? And most people thought we learned from experience and picked someone we liked.

To be fair the BPS are not wholly to blame for this stuff. They just package it exceptionally well, trying to make this area of science respectable, and succeeding by drawing 1,000 delegates and dozens of journalists to their conference.

It is not their fault that many of the psychologists seem to base their finding on asking three men and a dog in Liverpool a question (and even then the dog ticked the "don't know" box). Rather it is our own desire to have our beliefs confirmed - if there's a study and a statistic to prove it. "Lies, damned lies and statistics", said the Duke of Wellington. He wouldn't get a look in these days.

Good old common sense just isn't good enough anymore. How otherwise do you account for the armies of management consultants and busi-

ness theorists that plague us?

Shelley once said that poets are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind". Nowadays he should look at the sheaf of experts advising on management, whose words are now treated as holy writ. Business theory has spawned a whole host of annoying TLAs (three letter acronyms) such as CPD (continuous professional development, or updating your

skills to you and me) and TQM (total quality management, or changing things gradually). So someone has made a lot of money telling people that keeping up to date with what's going on and not going for radical changes overnight could be good for you.

Still that is nothing compared to the vast array of self-help books that assault the eye in every bookshop. I have to declare an interest here. I used to buy self-help books by the shelf until a ex-boyfriend brought a Dale Carnegie book home

from America for me. It was called *How To Stop Worrying And Start Living*. I spent the afternoon in a feverish anxiety unable to stop worrying because he thought I needed this book. That is when I stopped buying them.

Still I wish I thought of Dory Hollander PhD's idea which is a book called *101 Lies Men Tell Women and Why Women Believe Them*, with ex-

amples such as Lie 3: "You're the only one", and Lie 38: "I'm going to leave my wife." The reason why women believe such things (and why men would too in the same situation) is our own desire to be wanted and our fear of failure and rejection. Your mother would tell you that for nothing; but because she's not a published author or a PhD, you're inclined to ask Dory instead.

In the same way the Church of England, with its disapproval of sex before marriage, would be happy to tell us: "Don't rush

to sex - just think how much passion will have been built up by the time you actually say yes." But then we would rather hear that from the authors of *The Rules* who, after all, inform us they both have found the perfect man.

But these books pale into insignificance compared to the publishing sensation of last year - *The Little Book of Calm* by Paul Wilson (head of an advertising agency in Australia) which contains profound aphorisms, such as "Smile, even when you don't feel like it." And "Declare today a holiday!" This book had sold 600,000 copies by the end of 1997 just to give us some cod comfort.

The reason why we love the BPS psychologists and the self-help books is that they confirm what we ourselves believe, making us feel more important for agreeing with the professionals. I hate to get up on Mondays, but now I know that Science says I'm not the only one. It's a law. Everyone is happy. We get our prejudices confirmed, and the learned societies, theorists and authors make some money.

But this is all too easy. It is a pick'n'mix attitude to life, a way of justifying whatever we want by selecting the right study or the right book. Rather than asking your mother. Who after all will sometimes give you an unpalatable truth. At least, that's what 53 per cent of surveys say.



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Dr. J. K. P.



# Monsignor Alfred Gilbey

"THE LAST thing I want," said Alfred Gilbey one evening after dinner, "is to have an obituary about me saying what I did, rather than what I tried to be."

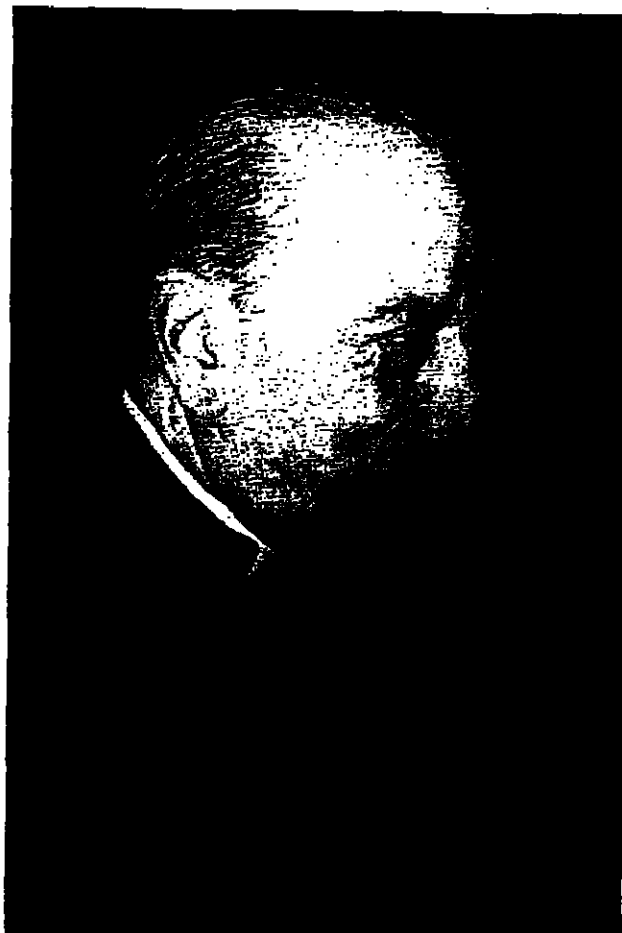
Monsignor Alfred Gilbey was probably the best-known Roman Catholic priest in England during the last quarter-century. Indeed, it was precisely for what he was that he was so well known. For he did not just "act as" - in the popular but distinctly non-Gilbeyan phrase - Catholic chaplain at Cambridge University for 33 years. Rather, he was the archetypal Roman Catholic University chaplain for the England of the 19th century. Spiritually and psychologically he remained undetachable from the late Victorian world, espousing a brand of Catholicism that was Roman rather than, in any way, ecumenical, and English rather than, in any way, Irish. That his death marks the end of an era is a cliché that, for once, is literally true.

Alfred Newman Gilbey was born on 13 July 1901. To have been born a day before or a day after, as he himself was often later to aver, would have been singularly inappropriate. For 12 July is Orange Day. In commemorating, as it does, the triumph of the Protestant King William of Orange over the last of the Stuarts, it was anathema to Alfred Gilbey. For he was a passionate lover of the "old" Catholic idea of monarchy and its personification in the person and ideals of James II. Indeed, for him, the latter was not the "last of the Stuarts" at all. By his reckoning, the "legitimist" line never died out and portraits of "James III", and even "Henry IX" (Cardinal Duke of York) adorned the walls of Fisher House - home of the Catholic chaplaincy - during his days at Cambridge.

It would have been scarcely less convivial to him to have been born on 14 July, Bastille

Day. For his distaste for all that was associated with the slogan "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" was unbounded. Such distaste must be understood within the context of late-19th-century papalism as represented, in particular, by Pope Pius IX, and the subsequent campaign against "Modernism" in all its forms. The rot, according to this school of thought, had started with the French Revolution. Thus, not only was "liberalism" condemned but so were "religious freedom" and individual rights of conscience as then understood, that is, as implying the possibility of any legitimate opposition to Rome's monopoly of the truth.

The overturning of these notions at the Second Vatican Council in 1962 became the main ground for "traditional" Catholic resistance to ecumenism and an updated vision of the Church. Gilbey's adherence however, to pre-Conciliar ideals endeared him to the world of England's "old Catholic families". Though not born into this world himself, he became its most enduring hero. He represented the triumph of hope over experience for those who still longed for the "conversion of England" (back to the "one true faith").



Gilbey: Victorian outlook and ultramontane Catholicism

introduced this intensely Catholic atmosphere into every aspect of daily life at Mark Hall, which was visited every week by a priest to say Mass and hear confessions. He was dressed in severely Victorian clerical style, a circumstance which, though natural enough at the time, had a surprisingly deep and durable effect on the impressionable young Alfred.

The Englishman with whom Victoria Maria fell in love, Newman Gilbey, was told by her mother that he would be acceptable as a prospective son-in-law provided he became a Catholic. This he obediently did and duly became a devout practitioner.

It was from him that Alfred derived his middle name, which turned out to be particularly apt. For it was the 19th century's most famous Catholic "convert" - a word now dropped from official use - who supplied not only the name for Oxford's pioneering Catholic chaplaincy, the Newman Society, but also the main inspiration for vigorous Catholic participation in tertiary education. (The papal ban on English Catholics attending universities was only lifted in 1893, six years before Gilbey was born.)

During Gilbey's years at Beaumont, Jesuit educators in England still thought in terms of the great post-Reformation counter-attack, spearheaded by their original predecessors, against Protestantism (the "Counter-Reformation"). The other principal leitmotif of their system was contemplation - as taken from the Spiritual Exercises of their founder, St Ignatius - of death, hell and final judgement. In a chapel eerily lit by a solitary blue bulb (in case of air-raid) night prayers would end with a meditation on Death. The boys would then walk in silence to their dormitories to undress in their cubicles, behind tightly drawn curtains, while a prefect read the *De Profundis*.

From Beaumont, Gilbey went up, in 1920, to Trinity College, Cambridge, "scrapping", in his own word, an indifferent degree in Modern History. This was due to no lack of intellect on his part, for he had a quick mind and, until late in life, a retentive memory for past facts. The family's distinguished connection with the wine trade made Gilbey a lifelong lover and true (that is moderately partaking) connoisseur of wine; but it could not, as a career, compete with what he was later to call "the sublime and awful gift of the priesthood".

He thus entered the Pontifical Beda College in Rome in 1925 and became a priest four years later. He was ordained "under his own patronage", a privilege now discontinued, meaning that, as a man of independent means, he was not subject to any diocesan bishop's jurisdiction. He could, had he so wished, have enjoyed the life of a country gentleman in the "recusant" atmosphere of some old Catholic family house. Instead, after three years as secretary to the bishop of his adopted diocese (Brentwood), Dr Doubleday, he was appointed chaplain to the Catholic undergraduates of Cambridge. This post was to last for 33 years and to be his life's work, an im-

mensely fruitful one as a priest. He is still remembered with affection and respect in Cambridge for his charm, urbanity and generous hospitality, and for his ability to attract young men of the "right kind" to Roman Catholicism.

In the Cambridge of the Thirties, the term "undergraduate" applied to men only. Women were not admitted to undergraduate status until 1948. This was the technical reason for the non-admission of Catholic (women) "students" (taking only titular degrees) to the life of Fisher House. The Oxford chaplaincy, on the other hand, as of the Second World War, became and remained "mixed". The result was a thriving social life, as a by-product of the pastoral function of the chaplaincy, productive of many happy friendships and, in the happiest cases of all, lifelong romances between Oxford's Catholic young men and women.

Until the end, however, Gilbey maintained his opposition to the admission of women. The ultimate reason was his rejection of the notion of "equality of the sexes" in the modern sense of the word. He was strongly opposed to women, whether Catholic or not, being admitted to the university at all. The Monsignor (he became a "domestic prelate" to the Pope in 1950), never fully at ease in female company, resigned as chaplain in 1965 when it became certain that Fisher House would open its doors to women undergraduates. He had, by then, completed exactly 100 terms as chaplain. His final request to the chaplaincy, and Cambridge in general, was the successful outcome of his untiring efforts in helping to save Fisher House from the developers' bulldozer.

His intense conservatism was reflected, perhaps above all, in his liturgical tastes. He was said to be a devotee of the "La-

tin Mass", but, here, a widespread misunderstanding has taken root. It arises from the erroneous supposition that Mass in Latin has been abolished because of the reintroduction of the more ancient tradition of vernacular language for liturgical worship.

What differentiated Alfred Gilbey from other post-Vatican II Catholic priests was that he continued, with special permission from his Bishop, to say Mass in the form fixed by Pope Pius V after the Council of Trent (hence "Tridentine"), complete with all its medieval accretions and the novel theological overtones thereof. The "Tridentine" Mass is, nevertheless, still passionately favoured by some Roman Catholics, being the Mass, *par excellence*, of the Counter-Reformation and the shibboleth thereafter of anti-Protestant "orthodoxy".

Another notable Gilbey characteristic was adherence to the clerical dress of another age. For everyday wear: shovel hat, flyless breeches, double-waisted waistcoat and frock coat. For formal occasions: monsignorial cassock with colourful silk cincture, piping and embellishments. When "robed in the sanctuary": watered-silk purple soutane, tasselled cape and purple pompon to biretta. This was as much a protestation of his Victorian outlook and "ultramontane" Catholicism as a mere question of sartorial preference.

One of his proudest achievements was his authorship - at one remove - of a small book called *We Believe* (1983), a lengthy paraphrase of the old "penny" catechism. It was compiled by four young friends who, in his own words, "gave me no peace until I agreed to have my thoughts recorded". In 1992, following his 90th birthday, a second impression appeared, and in 1993 *The Commonplace Book of Monsignor Alfred*.

Gilbey, a book of his favourite extracts from literature.

In May 1995 he made his one and only visit to the United States to promote *We Believe*. There he met Mother Angelica, the eccentric television nun whose views on the Church were even more ultra-conservative than his own. He was interviewed by her on Eternal Word Television, a network sponsored by rich right-wing American Catholics. He greatly enjoyed his visit and his success with his American audience was a perfect example of his unfailing old-world charm. The ease, moreover, with which he adapted to late-20th-century American television was a revelation.

Gilbey spent his last years in the Travellers' Club, in Pall Mall in London, still maintaining an active pastoral and social life and entertaining with his familiar generosity and Epicurean flare. He said Mass every day at 7.30am, usually in the (Brompton) Oratory, but sometimes in his own private chapel, a privilege he enjoyed in his years of retirement. This "chapel" was a converted attic in the Travellers' Club where the Blessed Sacrament was "reserved" and the rosary recited every evening at seven. He also used it, with inspiration from the valuable furnishings and works of sacred art, for periods of private prayer and meditation.

Alfred Gilbey was a man of regular and moderate habits; of elegance and charm; of wit and wisdom; of precision and contentment; of holiness and spiritual contentment. He was probably more widely loved than any Catholic priest of modern times.

Gerard Noel

Alfred Newman Gilbey, priest; born Harlow, Essex 13 July 1901; ordained priest 1929; Roman Catholic Chaplain, Cambridge University 1932-65; died London 26 March 1998.

## Daniel Massey

TALL, lean and strikingly handsome, with a languidly caressing voice, the versatile and enormously talented actor Daniel Massey displayed remarkable range in a long and distinguished career in film, television and, primarily, theatre, both in New York, where he starred in such shows as *She Loves Me* (1963) and *Taking Sides* (1995), and London, where his work embraced plays classic and modern, revues and musicals.

The son of the famous Canadian actor Raymond Massey and the actress Adrienne Allen, and the godson of Noël Coward, he was born in London in 1933 and educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge (where he acted with the university's Footlights Club). After two years in the Scots Guards he decided to follow in his parents' footsteps, appearing at the Connaught Theatre, Worthing, in Agatha Christie's *Peril at End House*. He made his London debut at the Cambridge Theatre in 1957 with an out-

standing performance as a gauche young American aristocrat in *The Happiest Millionaire*, a delightful comic portrayal which earned the cheers of first-nighters and rave reviews.

The same year, he made his adult screen debut (as a boy he had had a role in Coward's *In Which We Serve*) in *Girls at Sea* and the following year he displayed his song and dance ability in the revue *Living for Pleasure* starring Dora Bryan (who named her oldest child, adopted during the run, after him). One of the show's highlights was Massey's smooth rendition with Annie Marden of the Richard Addinsell/Arthur Macrae duet "Love You Good, Love You Right", and it led to the starring role in the Wolf Mankowitz musical *Make Me An Offer* (1959). With a stylishly witty performance as Charles Surface in John Gielgud's revival of *The School for Scandal* at the Haymarket in 1962, Massey demonstrated his versatility, and throughout his career would

prove equally adept in musicals, dramas, comedies and classics. In 1963 in New York he created the role of George, the young salesman conducting a pen-pal romance with, unknowingly, his own shop assistant colleague (Barbara Cook). In the musical *She Loves Me*, now regarded a classic though it initially ran for only nine months. "When we came to the last performance," said Massey later, "I cried right through the show... perhaps because it is so rare in one's work that one can persuade oneself you say, 'Hey, that was good.'"

He returned to London to play Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* (1964) at the Royal Court, then starred in Neil Simon's comedy *Barefoot in the Park* (1965), as Captain Absolute in *The Rivals* (1966) and Jack Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1967).

He returned to musicals with *Popkiss* (1972) in London and a stage version of the film *Gigi* (1973) in New York, though nei-

ther was a great success. Sporadic film appearances included *The Entertainer* (1960) and *Moll Flanders* (1965), and in 1968 his performance as his own godfather Noel Coward in *Star!*, the film biography of Gertrude Lawrence, was indisputably the best thing about the film, winning him a Golden Globe Award as Best Supporting Actor, plus an Oscar nomination. Coward himself wrote after seeing it, "Daniel Massey was excellent as me and had the sense to give an impression of me rather than try to imitate me. He was inclined enough to sing better than I do, but of course without my special musical charm!"

In fact, Massey both sang well and purveyed a lot of charm, and had the film been more successful it might have led to more prolific screen work. Instead, he concentrated on the theatre where his Lytton Strachey in Peter Luke's *Bloomsbury* (1974), and *Othello* in Birmingham (1976) and a memorable Rosmer in *Rosmersholm* (1977) found him successfully tackling weightier

roles. Joining the National Theatre, he played in *The Philanderer* (1979), *The Hypochondriac* (1981) and won the Sweet award as Best Actor for his John Tanner in *Shaw's Man and Superman* (1981). Two seasons with the Royal Shakespeare Company (1983-84) included works by Shakespeare, Saroyan (*The Time of Your Life*) and Granville Barker (*Waste*). "The Shaws, the Shakespeares and the Chelkows are meat and drink to me," Massey stated. "It's the ambiguities in roles that are so important." In 1987 he played the tortured hero Ben in the London production of *Follies*, introducing a new song written for the character by Stephen Sondheim, "Make the Most of Your Music".

Massey's own private life had its share of anguish. His parents divorced when he was six, and his mother, a noted beauty and a major star, gave glittering parties but was cold to him. Massey later described her as "an evil woman, a psy-

chopath", comparing her emotionally with Myra Hindley; such criticism totally estranged him from his actress sister Anna. ("It's not Anna's, it's my problem," he would admit.) Massey did not see his mother for the last 10 years of her life and did not go to her funeral.

In the mid-fifties he married the actress Adrienne Corri (his mother refused to attend the wedding). "We were agonisingly incompatible but we had an extraordinary physical attraction," he stated. The tempestuous marriage ended in 1968, and after another relationship which produced a son, Paul, he married the actress Penelope Wilton, with whom he had a daughter, Alicia. After his divorce from Wilton, he formed a relationship with her younger sister Linda in 1984, the same year he started an ultimately successful course of psychotherapy to combat acute depression. Later he and Linda married, but in 1992 Massey was diagnosed with Hodgkin's dis-

ease. With typical wit and charm he joked about it: "If you've got to have a serious illness, that's the one to get, because it's get-at-able". And he successfully fought it off with chemotherapy, returning to the stage with an acclaimed performance as Wilhelm Furtwangler, the conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic during the Third Reich, in Ronald Harwood's *Taking Sides* (1995), which raised the question of the ambivalent conductor's motives in playing for Hitler's regime.

After the London run, Massey went to Broadway with the play, for what was sadly to be his last theatrical triumph.

Tom Vulliamy

Daniel Raymond Massey, actor; born London 19 October 1933; married first Adrienne Corri (marriage dissolved 1968), (one son), second Penelope Wilton (one daughter; marriage dissolved), third Linda Wilton (two stepdaughters); died London 25 March 1998.



Massey in *Waste*, 1985. Photograph: Hulton Getty

### Birthdays

TODAY: Queen Ingrid of Denmark, 88; Mr Gordon Adam, MEP 64; Lord Alton of Liverpool, leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, 43; Miss Rosemary Ashe, operatic soprano, 45; Sir Dirk Bogarde, actor and author, 77; The Hon George Bruce, portrait and landscape painter, 87; Mr Steve Bull, footballer, 33; Professor Lord Butterfield, former Master, Downing College, Cambridge, 78; Sir Robert Clarke, chairman, Thames Water, 69; Sir Richard Ewe, former artistic director, Royal National Theatre, 55; Mr James Hawley, Lord-Lieutenant for Staffordshire, 61; Professor Peter Hennessy, contemporary historian, 51; Mr Peter Howell, former Principal, London University, 62; Lord Hutchinson of Lillingdon QC, former Recorder of the Crown Court, 83; Lord Judd, consultant on social and political affairs, 63; Mr Neil Kinnock, former MP, a Member of the European Commission, 56; Mr Raymond Lister, artist and author, 79; Mr Martin Neary, Organist and Master of the Chorists, Westminster Abbey, 59; Mr Michael Parkinson, television and radio presenter, 63; Sir Derek Roberts, Provost, University College, London, 64; Professor Merton Sandler, chemical pathologist, 72; Sir John Stephen, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 88; Mr Richard Stilgoe, entertainer, lyricist and musician, 55; Mr Peter Wilton-Stilwell, former chairman, S.G. Warburg, 63. TOMORROW: Sir Roy Beldam, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 73; Mr Richard Rodney Bennett, composer, 62; Miss Jennifer Capriati, tennis player, 22; Mr Bernard Davey, weather forecaster, 55; Professor James Diggle, classical scholar, 54; Sir William Dugdale, director and chairman, General Utilities, 76; Miss Julie Goodyear, actress, 53; Miss Margaret Howard, broadcaster, 60; Mr Eric Idle, actor and comedian, 55; Mr Jack Jones, former trade union leader, 85; Mrs Sheila Kitzinger, social anthropologist and birth educator, 69; Sir Arthur Knight, former chairman, Courtauld, 81; Miss Sylvia Law, town planning researcher, 67; Sir Patrick Lawrence, chairman, Enterprise Venture Capital Trust, 70; Mr John Major, former Prime Minister, 55; Sir Hugh Neill, former Lord-Lieutenant for South Yorks, 77; Sir John Paul, former Governor, 71; The Right Hon Lord Ros, Chairman, Judicial Studies Committee, Scotland, 71; Mr Keith Simpson, MP, 49; Miss Anne Stoddart, diplomat, 61; Mr John Suchet, television reporter and newscaster, 54; Lord Tibbitt, former MP, 67; Sir John Vane, pharmacologist and Nobel prizewinner, 71; The Right Rev James Weatherhead, Chaplain to the Queen in Scotland and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 67.

### Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: St Teresa of Avila, Carmelite nun, 1515; Maxim Gorki (Alexei Maximovich Peshkov), novelist, 1868. Deaths: Modest Petrovich Musorgsky, composer, 1881; Virginia Woolf (Adeline Vir-

ginia Stephen), author and critic, 1941; Sergei Vasilievich Rachmaninov, composer, 1943; Dwight David Eisenhower, general and statesman, 1969; Marc Chagall, painter, 1985; Eugene Ionesco, playwright, 1994. On this day: the Spanish Civil War ended, 1939; the last German V2 rocket fell on Britain, 1945; "Radio Caroline" began to transmit from a ship in the North Sea, 1964. Today is the Feast Day of St Gerontrius or Gerontrius and St Tudor. TOMORROW: Births: Sir Edwin Landseer Lupton, architect, 1869; Sir William Turner Watson, composer, 1902. Deaths: Thomas Coram, philanthropist, 1751; Emanuel Swedenborg (Svedberg), scientist and philosopher, 1772; Robert Falcon Scott, Arctic explorer, 1912. On this day: the last US troops left Vietnam, 1973. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of Saints Arrogantes, Masculus, Adiminius and Saturnus, St Berthold, St Cyril of Hellipolis, St Gondeulf or Woollo, St Gwladys, Saints Jonas, Barachinas and Others, St Mark of Arethusa and St Rupert of Salzburg.

### Lectures

TODAY: Victoria and Albert Museum: Alex Buck, "Pioneers in Design at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries", 2.30pm. National Portrait Gallery: Colin Pinney and Kathy Clancy, "W.B. Yeats and Maud Gonne: the gulf of love", 3pm. TOMORROW: Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Flassio's Green Parrot: multiple meanings", 2.30pm.

## FAITH & REASON

### Our universities are now temples of Mammon

Time, argued Cardinal Newman, is integral to a proper education. It is the one thing today's students are not allowed, says Margaret Atkins

YOU CANNOT serve God and Mammon, says Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, and then goes on to urge his disciples not to worry about tomorrow, for God will clothe them as he does the lilies and feed them as he does the sparrows. This might seem a piece of religious idealism if experience didn't suggest that we are losing currently losing our grip on reality. More than ever before, our society is controlled by the pursuit of wealth. From sport to science, from medicine to music, every activity is dominated by profits and audits; and each of us, perforce, is becoming a mini-accountant. We are living in a paper world, where what matters is numbers and documents rather than real events and real people. By serving Mammon, we are creating a world that is fictional.

Let me illustrate with a topical example: student fees. For the last decade or so, policy in higher education has

been driven by economic imperatives. A healthy economy needs lots of graduates, we are told. Therefore the number of students has been doubled. But students are expensive; therefore they must pay their own fees.

But no one asks the real questions: what do actual students in actual universities actually do? How does learning work? Consequently, no one has noticed the most important fact about student fees: they prevent students from being students. The process is already well under way. Outside Oxford and Cambridge, the majority of students undertake paid work during term-time, and many, if not most, are effectively studying part-time. The biggest single obstacle to getting students to study is that they do not have the time. Meanwhile, policy-makers muller about loss of public confidence, and impose yet more draconian methods of standardisation. More numbers, more paper, and less reality.

One man who thought deeply about the true purpose of universities was John Henry Newman. Soon after his much publicised conversion to Catholicism in 1845, he was asked to help found a Catholic university in Dublin. The complex world of Irish social and religious politics forced him to think subtly on many issues: the relation of religion to learning, the difference between pro-

fessional training and liberal education, the value of learning for its own sake. Newman's vision was profoundly influential for most of our own century.

Two ideas were crucial: first, the primary purpose of a university is not religious, nor moral, nor economic. Students study in order to learn how to think clearly. To Newman a healthy intellect was as obviously worth having as a healthy body. It was valuable in itself, for the individual and for the community.

Secondly, Newman thought carefully about how young people actually learn. He realised that formal lectures could only play a limited role; for mature learning is not simply passive. Students need to test, to explore, to interrelate new information and ideas. They do this best in informal debate, both among themselves and with their tutors. That is how they make learning their own.

We are quietly abandoning both of Newman's key insights. Education is no longer valuable for itself, but to make money. And informal learning has been undermined by the students' lack of free time for discussion. Their education is therefore becoming steadily more passive and mechanistic: they are learning to conform, but not to think. We are turning universities into graduate-factories, because we have narrowed our human goals until all that matters is money. Although Newman

believed that the ultimate purpose of life was serving God, he knew that religion leaves space for independent goods such as understanding, Mammon, however, demands total control. The universities are redefined as businesses, and we forget why we wanted them in the first place.

A balanced vision of human flourishing would allow us to criticise the system realistically. It would also enable us to appreciate genuine improvements. Wider access has opened the doors of universities to some fine mature students. They bring to their studies enthusiasm, independence, commitment, and a clear sense of why they are studying. They know that a healthy intellect is part of a good human life. They deserve society's support whether or not they will one day be rich: for they are students in the true sense of the word.

Lent is a time in which Christians pause to ask what really matters. The traditional Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving force us to question the role of money in our lives. By returning God to the centre, we can liberate ourselves into a larger vision of human happiness. We can learn to treat Mammon as a servant, not a master. And then, perhaps, we will re-establish contact with the real world, the world in which human beings actually live.

Announcements for BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding announcements, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, 10, Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 3DF. The Gazette Editor will be pleased to accept notices for publication in the Gazette. Notices should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, 10, Abchurch Lane, London EC4N 3DF. The Gazette Editor will be pleased to accept notices for publication in the Gazette.

Changing of the Guard: Tomorrow the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will change the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be seen in the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London. The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be seen in the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, London.

كتاب من الامم



# Broker provides a welcome boost for Reuters

## MARKET REPORT



PETER THAL LARSEN

REUTERS has not had a good time so far in 1998. Just three months into the year, the financial information giant's shares have taken a pummeling. While the market has soared to new highs, Reuters' shares have gone in the opposite direction.

First came the Asian crisis. Although Reuters maintains that financial upheaval boosts demand for timely and accurate information, the thought of collapsing Japanese banks handing back all their Reuters terminals was enough to give most investors the jitters.

Then Reuters was hit by allegations that it had stolen information from arch-rival Bloomberg and incorporated it in software used for analysing bonds. A Federal Grand Jury in New York is currently investigating the charges. While the company maintained a stony silence, investors ran for the hills, and the shares briefly touched a two-year low of 520p.

In recent weeks, however, the stock market has been taking a more considered view of Reuters. And the company was given a welcome boost yesterday when stockbroker Dresdner Kleinwort Benson slipped a buy recommendation on the shares with a target price of 750p. The shares promptly jumped 8.5p to 644.5p.

DKB argues that fears of slowing growth rates are overestimated. It expects Reuters to expand as the market for financial information consolidates, while new products will boost sales. The broker forecasts that profit growth over the next five years will average about 11 per cent. While the US investigation remains a worry, the broker expects Reuters "to continue creating significant shareholder value."

The market staged a half-hearted recovery yesterday after a week of drift. But while Footsie was briefly showing a 71-point gain, it was dragged back by a fall on Wall Street

and ended the day up a modest 33.7 points at 5939.3. The midcap and smallcap indices also posted slight gains.

Best performer in the Footsie was Britton, the metals group which has had a torrid time since joining the stock market at 220p last summer. News that Venezuela is reviving plans to sell its state-run aluminium smelter, in which Britton has shown an interest, helped revive investors' interest. The shares closed up 9.5p at 165.5p.

Advertising outfit More Group, which agreed to a 1000p-a-share bid from US giant Clear Channel Communications last month, soared 33.5p to 122.5p as French rival JC Decaux announced that it was considering a counter-bid at a "meaningful premium" to Clear Channel's offer. More Group advised shareholders to make no action. Billboard group Maiden, which reports results on Monday, added 22.5p to 406p in sympathy.

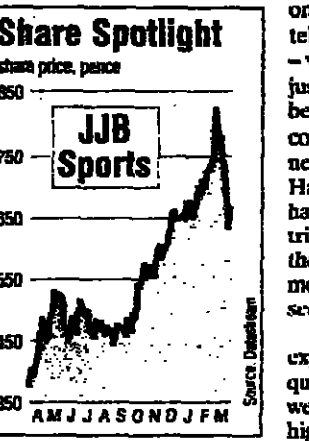
Sports retailer JJB Sports ended its recent slide, bouncing 35p to 670p. The shares were 82.5p a few weeks ago.

Mobile phone operator Orange continued to slide amid suggestions that SBC Warburg had been unable fully to place the 16 per cent stake it bought from British Aerospace yesterday. Now that the sale has taken place several brokers have turned negative on the stock. The shares, bought by Warburg for 390p, closed down 8p at 389p.

Next also continued to suffer from yesterday's profit warning, giving up another 9p to settle at 535p.

Racal firmed up to a 12-month high of 330p on a buy recommendation from Henderson Crosthwaite. The stockbroker calculates that, on current valuations, Racal's telecoms arm is worth £600m - valuing the rest of Racal at just £340m. That value should be crystallised when the telecoms business is floated in the next 18 months. Sir Ernest Harrison, Racal's chairman, has already twice pulled off the trick of releasing value from the company by demerging mobile operator Vodafone and security group Chubb.

Persistent bid chatter and expectations of good first-quarter figures, due out next week, pushed Vodafone up higher to 602p.



General Cable firmed up to 155.5p on suggestions that rival cable operator Telewest, 2p better at 94.5p, was about to table a £600m bid for the company. The group has already been holding discussions with NTL, the UK-based cable firm which is quoted on Nasdaq.

Aspen, providing specialist printing and marketing services, leapt 29.5p to 122.5p as Photobition, the photographic and printing services group, announced that it had bought a 2.9 per cent stake and might make a bid.

Printed circuit board maker Freeswitch was dumped 17p to 35p as it announced that bid talks had been terminated and that, due to delayed call off of contracts from major customers, it was trading "below market expectations".

Lady In Leisure, operating women-only health clubs, jumped 20p to 217.5p. The shares have soared from below 130p since the beginning of the year.

## TAKING STOCK

ROYAL JELLY group Regina jumped 3.25p to 10p. US marketing group Tri-Vantage International, which specialises in direct response, electronic and network marketing, will take over the marketing and distribution of Regina products in the US. To pay for the deal, it has agreed to subscribe to 1,128,300 new shares in Regina at 15p each.

DIAMOND explorer Petra Diamonds jumped 6p to 123.5p on AIM. It has signed a joint venture with Canadian exploration company ACE Energy to explore and develop three diamond concessions in Angola. ACE is putting up \$2m, freeing Petra to spend more on its remaining concessions.

RANGERS, the Scottish football club, held at 380p on Offer. In a series of transactions chairman David Murray has bought 29,300 shares, at prices between 350p and 380p, taking his stake to 60.88 per cent.

## Share Price Data

Table with 4 columns: Share, Price, Change, % Change. Includes sections for Market Leaders, Top 20 volumes, and FTSE 100 index by hour.

Main market data table with multiple columns: Share, Price, Change, % Change. Includes sections for Alcoholic Beverages, Banks, Chemicals, Consumer Goods, Electronics, Engineering, Food, Gas Distribution, Health Care, Household Goods, Insurance, Life Assurance, Media, Pharmaceuticals, Retailers, Services, Support Services, and Telecommunications.

Advertisement for Bloomberg Television featuring a quote from Kenneth Clarke: "Kenneth Clarke, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, shares his wealth of knowledge with us as he gives an in-depth view on the economy and other financial matters." Includes the text "Bloomberg TELEVISION" and "THE WISDOM OF WISDOM".

Continuation of market data table with columns: Share, Price, Change, % Change. Includes sections for Government Securities, Index-Linked, and various other financial instruments.



Founders of Computacenter could be worth £250m each as company prepares to cash in on soaring demand for UK information technology shares

## Computer giant lines up £1bn float

By Peter Thal Larsen

COMPUTACENTER, one of Britain's largest information technology companies, is preparing to join the Stock Exchange's booming IT index in a flotation which would value the group at around £1bn.

The company has appointed Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank, to handle the flotation. It is expected to confirm the move within the next few weeks.

A flotation would make Computacenter's two founders among the richest men in the country. Philip Hulme, the chairman, and Peter Ogden, a director, each have a 27 per cent stake in the company which would be worth at least £250m.

Computacenter, which distributes and installs computer systems for large corporate clients, has no need to raise any new money. The company has been consistently profitable and has funded most of its growth internally.

However, it is keen to provide a market for the shares held by its employees. About 700 of the group's 3,000 employees own 17 per cent of the company between them. A stock market listing would also allow the group to provide the rest of its workforce, which has expanded rapidly in recent years, with share options.

Moreover, it would give an

opportunity for Computacenter's financial backers to exit. Apex and Foreign & Colonial, the venture capital firms, have long-standing shareholdings of 22 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively.

With a valuation of £1bn, Computacenter would be the largest flotation of a UK information technology company to date. ICL, the Japanese-owned group which will be valued at £1.5bn-£2bn when it comes to the market, is not planning to float until the year 2000.

Computacenter would also become one of the largest companies in the Stock Exchange's fledgling IT sector. The largest company in the sector is Misy's. The software group, which narrowly missed out on joining the FTSE 100 index earlier this month, is worth £3.4bn. The index includes four other companies which are currently worth more than £1bn - Sema, Logica, CMG and Sage.

The introduction of the sector has generated a huge amount of interest in IT stocks from fund managers, who have driven up share prices to record levels. Since the Stock Exchange announced at the beginning of December that it planned to launch the sector, shares in the index's five largest constituents have risen by an average of almost 80 per cent.

Valuations have also risen rapidly. Software and services companies now regularly trade

on price-earnings ratios of between 30 and 40. This is partly the erosion of the discount that UK-based IT companies have traditionally suffered compared to their US counterparts. However, valuations of IT services companies such as CMG and Sema are now higher than similar firms in the US, prompting fears among some investors that any small setback would send share prices tumbling.

Computacenter has grown rapidly by setting itself up as "one-stop-shop" to supply companies with all their computer needs. It counts a third of the country's 1,500 largest companies as its customers.

The last reported figures, for the year to December 1996, show that Computacenter made a pre-tax profit of £34m on sales of £880m.

Although 1997 results have yet to be published, they are expected to show that profits grew to £45m on turnover of about £1bn.

Computacenter is benefiting from the growing complexity of computer systems and increased demand for suppliers to help install products.

Rather than simply supply boxes, the company now also offers value-added services, and training which allow it to compete on factors other than price.

Margins have risen sharply in recent years and, at 5 per cent, are well above the industry average.



Clean sweep: The finals of the Exco/Dow Jones Broomball contest at Broadgate ice rink in the City yesterday  
Photograph: Emma Boon

## Mahon bank to be sold

By Lea Paterson

GUINNESS MAHON - one of the oldest names in British banking - is set to be sold to Investec, the South African bank, for around £100m.

The deal raises the spectre of job cuts at the two organisations, particularly at Henderson Crosthwaite, Guinness Mahon's stockbroker, and Carr Sheppard, Investec's stockbroker arm.

The Bank of Yokohama (BoY), Guinness Mahon's Japanese parent, announced yesterday it was in "exclusive negotiations" with Investec over the sale. David Potter, Guinness Mahon's chief executive, said he expected the two parties to sign an agreement "imminently, probably some time next week". Mr Potter and his opposite number at Investec celebrated last night at a champagne reception at Guinness Mahon's offices.

Bernard Kantor, group managing director at Investec, said the acquisition of Guinness Mahon would allow his company to achieve "a critical mass" in key banking and broking markets.

He added the purchase would add both an institutional broking and a corporate finance business to his bank.

One of the main areas of overlap between the two groups is in stockbroking, and neither Mr Potter nor Mr Kantor ruled out the possibility of job losses. Mr Potter said some areas of the two groups needed to be integrated, and that any process of rationalisation would be done "quietly, gently and in a professional way".

The banks did not disclose Guinness Mahon's price tag, although sources close to the deal said the price was likely to be around £100m.

Mr Potter declined to discuss his likely role within the new organisation. "We have a lot of work to do... there will be more announcements in the coming weeks," he said.

Investec is to buy the entire Guinness Mahon group, including its stake in Guinness Flight Hambros Asset Management, a joint venture with Hambros. It is not yet known whether Investec will also seek to buy Hambros' stake.

## Decaux joins chase for More

By Kerry Benefield

THE advertising industry was thrown into turmoil yesterday after France's JC Decaux announced plans to trump Clear Channel Communication's £466m bid for More Group, the leading player in the UK outdoor advertising market.

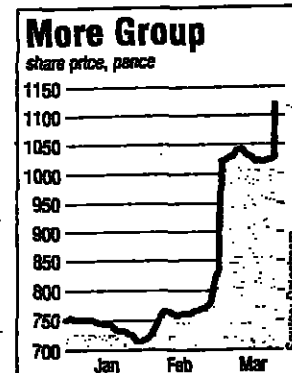
More Group's share price surged almost 10 per cent after New Decaux, a subsidiary of Decaux SA, announced it had "approached More Group to inform it that New Decaux is considering making an offer". More Group made headlines earlier this month when it agreed to a cash bid from Clear Channel, the US media giant, that sent share prices up 23 per cent.

Clear Channel's offer was a 25 per cent premium on More's previous share price. At the time, industry analysts called the bid a "full and fair" offer. Roger Parry, More's chief executive, said that should an offer better than Clear Channel's be put on the table, it would be considered. "Our job is to maximise shareholder value. Our shareholders would have never forgiven us if we would have turned Clear Channel down." At the time of the deal, Mr Parry was quoted as saying the deal was at a "huge premium. We just couldn't say no."

Yesterday he said he had yet to be contacted by Decaux. "I'm a bit mystified by the whole thing. I've literally not had a phone call." Analysts said any offer by Decaux for More would run into immediate regulatory difficulties. "Any deal probably won't wash with regulators when you look at Decaux's family tree," Lorna Tilman, analyst with Pannure Gordon, said. "There is very likely going to be some sort of regulatory hurdle there, which is exactly why I'm wondering why they've made the offer at all."

Decaux SA is 20 per cent owned by Compagnie des Eaux, the conglomerate which this month moved to take over Havas, the world's fifth-largest media group. Havas owns Mills & Allen Holdings, one of Britain's largest outdoor advertising companies. "We'd be looking at a French-style cartel," Ms Tilman said.

Charles Cook, a Decaux spokesman, said contact had been made to More's financial representatives and that if an official bid were made, it was prepared to offer the group a "meaningful premium of not less than 5 per cent" over Clear Channel's offer. "This is a serious offer which has been made with real intent."



Decaux, which like More specialises in placing advertising on bus shelters, operates in 19 countries and employs approximately 4,000 people.

More, which operates in 22 countries, has almost 1,000 employees.

Clear Channel, which owns radio and television stations throughout the US, made the offer for More as part of an effort to enter the international advertising market, following acquisitions in US radio, television and outdoor advertising. Yesterday More issued a statement to stockholders to take no action. More's share price rose 93.5p to 1122.5p.

Success or not, for some industry leaders the rewards just keep pouring in

## BAe chief nets £3.5m, with a bonus to come

By Michael Harrison



Sir Dick Evans: pay package lifts off

SIR Dick Evans, the chief executive of British Aerospace, received a pay package worth £3.5m last year and is in line for a 75 per cent increase in bonus entitlements in the current year.

BAe's annual report and accounts shows Sir Dick's total pay, including pension contributions, rose from £568,456 in 1996 to £727,879 - an increase of 28 per cent. In addition, he made a gain of £2.25m by cashing in share options and received shares under BAe's long term performance plan worth a further £450,000. These shares cannot be released until next year.

The accounts also show Robert Kirk, head of BAe's North American operations, retired with a package worth £4.5m after cashing in options in BAe and a subsidiary.

The bonus schemes, under

which executive directors can earn 100 per cent of their base salaries, are being amended so that the maximum entitlement will be 175 per cent.

Under the old scheme the maximum annual bonus payable is being raised from 40 per cent to 75 per cent while the awards available in the performance share plan are increasing from 60 per cent to 100 per cent of base salary.

The number of matching shares available when the annual bonus is taken in the form

of shares is also being increased, from 20 per cent to 50 per cent.

Sir Robin Biggam, BAe's remuneration committee chairman, said performance targets that triggered the increased awards were also being made tougher. BAe will seek shareholder approval for the changes at the annual meeting on 29 April.

So far a total of 150,000 shares with a market value of £3m have been granted under the performance share plan.

Roy Gardner, chief executive of Centrica, the trading arm of British Gas, was paid £493,000 last year. This compares with £239,000 in 1996, before the merger of British Gas, when he was finance director and then chief executive designate of Centrica. He is also sitting on 1.3m share options showing a £428,000 profit and has a notional allocation of 1.23m shares under Centrica's long term incentive scheme.

By Andrew Yates

SIR Richard Sykes, chairman of Glaxo Wellcome, received a total package of salary and shares worth more than £4.75m last year despite presiding over a fall in profits and failing to seal a merger with SmithKline Beecham.

His total remuneration rose more than 50 per cent to £1.7m, including a performance bonus of £836,000, according to the group's annual report.

Sir Richard also made a profit of nearly £1.8m on exercising share options and received new shares, currently worth almost £1.3m.

The report reveals that Sean Lance, the executive groomed to become chief operating officer at Glaxo before his shock resignation last October, received a pay off of £900,000, bringing his total remuneration to more than £1.7m in 1997. He is also sitting on Glaxo shares worth more than £1.3m

which were awarded as part of an incentive scheme. Mr Lance was due to take up his new role this year but left the group when it was felt he was not up to the job.

Following his departure, Bob Ingram, head of Glaxo's US operation, was appointed chief executive. He saw his total pay package rise 64 per cent to almost £1.2m, including a bonus of £595,000. His basic pay is likely to rise sharply this year from £485,000 in his new role. Mr Ingram will also receive a one-off cash payment of £590,000 to reflect his move from the group's US long term incentive scheme to the UK.

Glaxo's total boardroom pay rose more than £2.5m to £7.8m in a year that the group's profits fell 9 per cent to £2.7bn due to the expiry of the patent on Zantac, the leading ulcer drug. Glaxo and SmithKline stunned investors when they called off a merger which would have the biggest corporate deal ever seen.

By Nigel Cope

GREAT Universal Stores' bid for Metromail, the American database services company, was hanging in the balance last night pending a court ruling in the US.

The uncertainty came after the battle for Metromail looked like turning into an auction with both GUS and its rival bidder, American Business Information, increasing their offers.

GUS started the process when it increased its bid from \$31.50 to \$34.50 per share, valuing Metromail at \$888m (£540m). This was immediately trumped by its rival, American Business Information, which said it was prepared to offer "at least" \$34.75 for the business.

ABI yesterday asked a judge in Delaware to issue an injunction by Tuesday against the proposed deal between GUS and Metromail. Without that injunction GUS is set to take control of the company

with its increased offer which has the backing of the directors and RR Donnelly, a printing group which owns a 38 per cent stake.

The bid has degenerated into a welter of legal wrangling. ABI has sued GUS, claiming it attempted to prevent a fair auction for the business from taking place. GUS has responded with its own writ claiming ABI had no right to interfere.

Analysts said the complications were not ideal for GUS as the company is also embroiled in a £1.6bn hostile bid for Argos.

Ashley Thomas at SG Securities said: "GUS won't want to look like it is getting into a bidding war. But at these levels the difference is not significant in terms of the size of GUS. People might be concerned if they paid more than \$37."

Mr Thomas said the implications for the Argos deal were unclear. "At 570p (the price of the GUS bid) Argos is more

attractive because it is not the kind of opportunity that is going to come along very often. Whereas there are a variety of information services companies in the US."

Other analysts said it was more important for GUS to build its information services business and that Argos was not a "must have" deal. GUS is keen to complete the Metromail deal as the business would be a neat fit with its Direct Technology Group in Illinois which it acquired last year.

Metromail is based just 10 miles from D-Tech and the two companies had already considered a merger before GUS acquired D-Tech.

GUS shares fell 9p to 77p on the news. Argos shares rose 2p to 622p. Argos is expected to publish its final defence document next week, provided the Office of Fair Trading makes its decision on whether or not to clear the bid. The City is expecting a return of cash to shareholders.

### The week in the markets

#### STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5929.30	33.70	0.57	6105.80	4189.10	3.41
FTSE 250	5553.20	17.80	0.32	5644.40	4384.20	3.10
FTSE 100	5929.30	14.90	0.25	2917.00	2075.70	3.39
FTSE All Share	2785.44	14.11	0.51	2828.77	2056.07	3.30
FTSE Smallcap	2527.90	7.20	0.27	2631.40	2182.10	2.82
FTSE Pre-Open	1415.30	3.20	0.23	1414.30	1225.20	3.19
FTSE AIM	1061.30	2.90	0.27	1109.30	965.80	1.04
Dow Jones	8812.52	-35.37	-0.40	8853.24	6356.78	1.59
Nikkei	16739.26	-241.36	-1.42	20910.79	14488.21	0.96
Hong Kong	11735.50	-22.38	-0.19	16820.31	7939.13	3.43
S&P 500	9083.16	-43.40	-0.48	9100.19	5192.35	1.80

#### INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84
7.24	5.84	5.84

Money Market Rates	1 year	1 yr 6 mo	2 yr	3 yr	5 yr
UK	7.24	1.18	7.68	0.50	5.84
US	5.84	0.08	5.84	0.48	5.84
Japan	0.75	0.17	0.70	0.01	1.90
Germany	3.25	0.30	3.81	0.39	4.50

Bond Yields	1 yr	1 yr 6 mo	2 yr	3 yr	5 yr
UK	7.24	1.18	7.68	0.50	5.84
US	5.84	0.08	5.84	0.48	5.84
Japan	0.75	0.17	0.70	0.01	1.90
Germany	3.25	0.30	3.81	0.39	4.50

MAIN PRICE CHANGES	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
More Group	1122.50	93.50	8.33
Clear Channel	1220.00	77.50	6.35
British Gas	145.50	9.50	6.53
AB Sports	670.00	35.00	5.21

#### CURRENCIES

£/\$	£/DM	£/¥
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310
1.6227	1.6310	1.6310

Other Indicators	Value	Chg	% Chg
US DOLLAR	150.07	0.12	0.08
DM	163.10	0.01	0.01
YEN	163.10	0.01	0.01
DM/\$	1.6310	0.01	0.01
Y/\$	1.6310	0.01	0.01

#### TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.458	Italy (lira)	2.956
Austria (schillings)	20.96	Japan (yen)	215.25
Belgium (francs)	61.63	Malta (lira)	0.6431
Canada (\$)	2.3223	Netherlands (guilders)	3.3602
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8667	Norway (krone)	12.37
Denmark (krone)	11.44	Portugal (escudos)	304.06
Finland (markka)	9.1189	Spain (pesetas)	252.59
France (francs)	9.9927	South Africa (rand)	8.0411
Germany (marks)	2.9927	Sweden (krone)	12.99
Greece (drachmas)	515.86	Switzerland (francs)	2.4467
Hong Kong (\$)	12.67	Turkey (lira)	390.347
Ireland (pence)	1.8555	USA (\$)	1.6478

Source: Thomson Cook





## JEREMY WARNER ON WHY THE GOVERNMENT SHOULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE POUND EVEN IF IT COULD, AND THE TROUBLE WITH HANSON'S ACCOUNTS

# Why we should be celebrating the strong pound

SHOULD or could the Government do anything about the strong pound? The first myth that needs to be exploded is that the pound is strong at all. Actually, it's not; by historic standards, it is weak. Only since Britain's ignominious exit from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1992 has it been consistently weaker. For much of the 1980s, it was stronger than it is now against the German mark. Go back as far as 1970, when each pound bought you nine D-marks, and you would have been thought mad to suggest that by 1998 it could be as low as three.

Still, by recent standards, the pound is undoubtedly high, almost 50 per cent stronger against the mark than its low point back in 1995. And given how much of Britain's economic revival post our exit from the ERM has been attributed to the pound's subsequent devaluation, that's plainly cause for concern of some sort.

All this week, the Commons Treasury Select Committee has been grilling economists and Treasury officials over the strong pound. MPs Tony and Labour alike, are becoming increasingly fretful. It's destroying our manufacturing industry, it's undermining our exports, something must be done, is the general refrain.

Even if these things were true, which is not in the least bit certain, it is not clear the Government could do anything. Control of

monetary policy has been placed with the newly independent Bank of England. The only way Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, could directly persuade the Bank to reduce interest rates, thereby taking the pressure off the pound, is by significantly raising the ceiling on its inflation target. No one wants that, do they?

What about that old chestnut, much beloved of amateur economists, that the Chancellor should be cooling the economy by being tougher fiscally, removing the need for any further monetary tightening? The Chancellor could certainly have done more in the Budget. If he's going to abolish tax relief on mortgages, for instance, now would have been the time to do it. Nobody would have been unduly surprised or upset by it. But actually, there is already a very significant fiscal tightening in progress and it is not clear that to have been tougher still would have pushed the pound lower. The reality could easily have been the reverse.

This needs explaining. When the pound first started climbing, I put it all down to the interest rate cycle. It was a temporary, cyclical thing, I said, no more than a blip in sterling's historic decline. I was wrong about this. Interest rates are a part of the story, but there has also been a sea change in the attitude of international capital, which is being attracted to these shores by the perceived health and strength of our economy.

If Gordon Brown had been tougher still, that perception might have been strengthened further. Far from falling, the pound would have strengthened even more.

So it's not clear that the Chancellor could do anything. Nor in my view should he. The evidence of recession in manufacturing industry is at best ambivalent. Exchange rates are obviously an important factor in determining international competitiveness, but productivity, investment and costs are the key. Some of the highest pay awards of the last year have been in manufacturing. Not much sign of pain there.

Meanwhile some other areas of the economy, notably services, stock and property values, are experiencing near boom conditions. Right now, the UK economy needs lower interest rates like a hole in the head. Now is apparent that we need a lower pound. If the strong pound is a reflection of the underlying strength of our economy, then we should all feel glad about it.

IT WAS Robert Hanson's near £500,000 payoff that grabbed the headlines when Hanson PLC published its annual report and accounts recently, and justifiably so. What Mr Hanson did to justify his salary was there was hard enough to understand, let alone how he came to deserve such a splendid going away present.

But the accounts are worth close scrutiny for another reason too. This is not because they are illuminating in the normal sense of the word. Far from it. It is because despite the demerger of the old Hanson conglomerate into four "focused", easy to understand parts, of which this building materials group is one, the accounts remain a masterpiece of obfuscation and leading edge creativity. Even with the mind of an Einstein, you'd be hard pressed to penetrate these accounts.

Another of Lord Hanson's hallmarks lives on in his offspring too. For reasons not explained, the accounts continue to be audited by the Hull branch of Ernst & Young. I've got nothing against Hull and if accounts are to be judged by their ability to confuse, then Hull plainly has some highly accomplished members of the profession. All the same, it seems a little perplexing for an international business with annual sales of nearly £3bn.

However, even a mind as unsophisticated as mine is capable of seeing through some of the techniques used to bolster the balance sheet. Net current assets, a key indicator for bankers and investment analysts in assessing solvency, are boosted by £233m to £966.2m by the reallocation of tax from current to deferred liabilities. Not very clever really, but it does the trick. The previous year Hanson injected the drug intravenously by taking £166m of tax provisioning

straight into the profit and loss account. Presumably that £233m, once it has spent a year or two in the purgatory of deferred liabilities, will be heading off to same way.

These handy, not so little, provisions, seem to be a leftover from the group's tax avoidance (sorry, planning) exercises. Hanson used to run through Panama and other offshore centres during the glory years of the great conglomerate. The tax would have been provided for in the balance sheet, just in case. As time passes and it becomes clear there is little possibility of the taxman being able to claim "his own", it can be fed back into profits.

If Hanson's accounts are sufficiently clear to allow sight of a wheeze like this, it is only possible to speculate on what else lies hidden beneath the surface. Professor Sir David Tweedie at the Accounting Standards Board has made commendable progress in harmonising accounting practice and limiting the opportunity for window dressing of accounts after the abuses of the 1980s, but for most of us the inner workings of the balance sheet and p&L remain as mysterious and impenetrable as ever. Oh, and another thing about Hanson. It's still only paying 17.5 per cent tax on its profits, little more than half the UK's official rate which, as Gordon Brown keeps telling us, is now the lowest in the developed world. Nice to see that some things never change.

## France bars arms link-up

By Michael Harrison

THE CREATION of a European aerospace and defence giant capable of taking on the Americans is being frustrated by the state ownership of France's leading player, Aerospatiale.

The four partners in Airbus - British Aerospace, Daimler Benz, Aerospatiale and Casa of Spain - yesterday announced they had agreed to the formation of a unified company bringing together all their civil and military aerospace activities.

But in a report to the governments of the four countries they also said that "significant further work remains to be done to establish the feasibility" of such a merged company. They also failed to put a timetable on when the merger might take place.

"Frankly, it is now up to the French government," said one industry source. "If we are to move forward it has to clarify its position. This single company has to be run to make money and the best way to guarantee that is not to have any government involvement as a shareholder."

Aerospatiale is 100 per cent owned by the French government. Earlier this week, Alan Richard, the French defence minister, said he did not believe its state

ownership should be an obstacle to a European-wide restructuring.

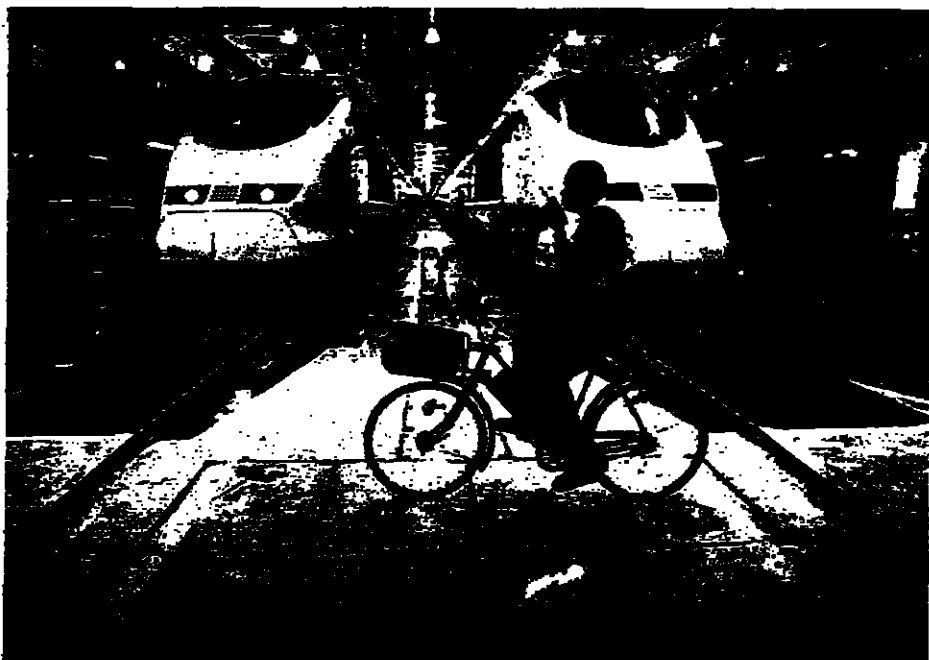
The report from the four Airbus partners came in response to a joint statement from the British, French and German governments last December calling for a firm plan and timetable for restructuring by 31 March.

Observers suggested at the time that the governments' deadline was unrealistic given the need to overcome the seemingly intractable ownership problem.

The industrial partners nevertheless said the report reflected "a wide measure of agreement in principle on the objectives, scope and operational structure" of the merged company. Other defence groups, notably Alenia, Saab, Dassault and Lagardere/Matra, would be invited to take part in the restructuring.

In a joint statement George Robertson, Defence Secretary, and Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, said they welcomed the wide measure of agreement that had been achieved but noted that further work was needed.

They added that urgent restructuring of Europe's defence industry was essential if it was to be globally competitive.



Paying the price: Eurostar track fees may soar

Photograph: Paulo Macarico

## £400m shaved off high-speed rail link

By Randeep Ramesh

JOHN PRESCOTT, the Deputy Prime Minister, confirmed yesterday that the high-speed Channel Tunnel Rail Link could be built in two phases with the taxpayer footing the extra cost of the project.

It is understood the additional subsidy required by London & Continental Railways, the consortium charged with building the link, is £400m less than £1.2bn which executives asked for earlier this year.

Mr Prescott also extended the deadline for the decision on the rail link for another 60 days. The future of the 68-mile link into St Pancras station, London, was thrown into doubt in January when Mr Prescott turned down a request for a further £1.2bn of public subsidy on top of the £1.8bn already agreed.

Although Sir Derek Hornby and Adam Mills are likely to lose their respective jobs as chairman and chief executive, LCR will be retained as the vehicle used to build the line - in order to avoid a lengthy re-tendering process.

Under the new plans, Railtrack will own the high speed

link. Bechtel, one of the original shareholders in LCR, will be the prime contractor and a consortium of National Express, British Airways and the French railway SNCF will take over the Eurostar service.

The phased construction on the link would see the first section from the Channel Tunnel to Ebbsfleet in North Kent built without public subsidy. This section would then be "bought" by Railtrack from LCR. However under this plan, there is no guarantee that the second more expensive line with a terminus at St Pancras would be built.

Mr Prescott said that the new proposals "do not yet meet the Government's requirements". He added both LCR and Railtrack agreed further "significant improvements" can be made in reducing the cost to the taxpayer, increasing the risk borne by the private sector and providing "sufficient incentive to ensure the construction of the whole of the rail link".

If the second section is completed, LCR would only finish the entire link from the Channel Tunnel via Stratford to St Pancras in 2008, five years after the scheduled start of services.

The failure of the original bid has also meant that the Eurostar service could return to public hands. However, LCR would like ministers to franchise the operation to a consortium of National Express, British Airways and SNCF, the French national railway.

However, Virgin is also bidding to run Eurostar trains, raising the possibility of Richard Branson facing another tussle with BA. Eurostar is likely to lose £600m until 2001, when it is projected to be profitable.

Railtrack's plan would see the company recouping its costs by charging large access fees to Eurostar. At present, the train company pays about £35m a year to use the tracks. The fees could be up to £250m.

The original LCR plan would have cut about 25 minutes off the 65-minute journey time into London for commuters from outer Kent. This will not happen if only the first stage of the CTRL is completed.

Sir Derek and Mr Mills are on one-year contracts and these will be honoured when the two men leave. Mr Mills is thought to have been paid around £200,000 last year and Sir Derek about £100,000.

## B&Q down as chief goes his own way

By Nigel Cope

KINGFISHER, the retail group, received a set-back yesterday when the head of its B&Q do-it-yourself subsidiary said he was quitting to pursue a new opportunity in retailing.

Jim Hodgkinson, 53, will leave the group at the end of April and will not receive a pay-off. He plans to make an announcement about his new venture next week. "It is in an area which does not compete with any of the Kingfisher businesses and we will be announcing the details shortly," he said.

Given the spread of Kingfisher's interests, analysts said it must be fashion or food retailing. There were rumours that Mr Hodgkinson might be joining Safeway, the struggling supermarket group, but the company denied it.

It is the second time Mr Hodgkinson has left the company. In 1995 he quit to join American DIY group Home Depot which was then considering entering the UK market. He came back to B&Q when the Home Depot changed its mind.

He said yesterday: "I'm sad to be going really. I've got a lot of good feelings about B&Q. I came back to turn the business round and I think people would say I have done that. It is just the right time for me now and it's nice to go out on a high."

Kingfisher shares dipped 18p to 1120p on the news but analysts said that though Mr Hodgkinson was highly regarded, the two joint managing directors - Martin Tobgood and Bill Whiting - were a good team. "I think the share price fall is a bit childish. It is all a storm in a teacup," said Nick Bubb of SG Securities.



Jim Hodgkinson: Pastures new

## United News and IPC consider joint ventures

UNITED NEWS & Media has agreed with magazine group IPC - which was bought by British venture capital firm Civen in January from Reed Elsevier Plc in an £860m MBO - "to investigate potential commercial ventures of mutual benefit". United News, which owns *The Express* and *Daily Star* newspapers, gave no further details of what this might involve. UNM also said David Arculus, its chief operating officer, had left and would become chairman of Severn Trent in July and chairman of IPC Group Ltd in October.

### Freedom comes later

THE NUMBER of days Britons have to work just to pay their taxes has risen by two following the Budget on 17 March, according to a think-tank. The right-wing Adam Smith Institute said in its annual post-Budget report that workers' "Tax Freedom Day" - the day they theoretically stop working to pay taxes and keep earnings for themselves - would be 27 May this year. "Brown's July budget pushed Tax Freedom Day to 25 May, 1997. His latest budget adds another two days of hard labour," it said.

### Receiver for caravan maker

ABOUT 700 jobs were in the balance last night after ABI Leisure, the caravan and motor home manufacturer, told its bankers to appoint receivers after failing to resolve its financial difficulties. Trading in shares in the group was suspended on Thursday. ABI Leisure reported losses of £3.6m last year and in January announced the departure of Terry Stewart, its group marketing director, who resigned after 23 years at the firm.

### Pension surplus for Unilever

UNILEVER, the Anglo-Dutch food group, said yesterday the pension fund for its Dutch employees would pay back surplus money to Unilever over a period of several years. The Progress pension fund holds an excess of 2 billion guilders (£590m), which will be paid to Unilever in annual instalments of 350 million guilders. The company said they will have "no direct influence" on profit. The shares rose 15p to close at 574p.

### BMW joins Rolls bidding

THE RACE for Rolls-Royce Motor Cars picked up speed yesterday as German car maker BMW said it had submitted a bid to counter an offer from rival Volkswagen. "Our offer is out," a BMW spokesman said. He declined to give further details. BMW has long said it wants the British luxury car company, but not at any price, warning the purchase would have to be economically viable. VW made an offer for Rolls on Tuesday but declined to put a value on it.

### Capital buys in Birmingham

CAPITAL & Regional Properties is buying the Pallasades shopping centre in Birmingham for £93.8m further building up its portfolio of large shopping centres. Capital & Regional said it would pay for the purchase in part with £59.1m raised through a rights offering of 21.8 million new shares.

COMPANY RESULTS				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Ashtons Holdings (Bry)	103.1m (73.0m)	5.8m (2.4m)	17.5p (1)	
Ashtons Estate (Bry)	(1)	37.5m (26.1m)	13.5p (12.0p)	9.3p (8.0p)
Ashtons Health Care (Bry)	3.3m (1.7m)	0.34m (0.26m)	3.3p (4.0p)	0.90p (nil)
Bee (Bry)	185.0m (215.7m)	-3.1m (18.1m)	-4.6p (16.4p)	nil (3.0p)
Brumfield (Bry)	3.7m (2.3m)	0.48m (0.47m)	0.3p (12.3p)	3.0p (3.0p)
James Group (Bry)	81.0m (98.0m)	82.5m (1.02m)	14.7p (4.6p)	
Langston Group (Bry)	2.10m (2.05m)	0.25m (0.21m)	0.33p (0.05p)	0.25p
Robert (Bry)	92.5m (90.0m)	22.5m (17.7m)	16.1p (11.9p)	0.2p (0.8p)
(P) - Profit (L) - Loss (B) - Borrow (S) - Split * Current figs 15 mths; previous 12 mths				

## Equity derivatives chief quits at Warburg Dillon Read

By Les Patterson

YVES, another top executive, quit at Warburg Dillon Read, the investment bank formed by the merger of UBS and SBC, the two Swiss banks. Renaud de Planta, who had been appointed head of equity derivatives at Warburg Dillon Read, is to join Pictet, a Swiss private bank, as a managing partner. Mr de Planta had

been with UBS for 12 years.

Mr de Planta's resignation is the latest in a series of top defections at Warburg Dillon Read, where several key managers are understood to be disaffected with the merger process.

Separately, Credit Suisse First Boston said it had appointed Keith Martin, formerly head of UK equity trading at UBS, as co-head of UK equity trading.

## WHO'S SUING WHO

### JOHN WILLCOCK

ARTHUR SCARGILL, President of the National Union of Miners, agreed a compromise in a legal wrangle with the Attorney General this week over the running of a miners' charity.

John Morris, QC, the Attorney General, got the backing of the High Court this week for a scheme to regulate the affairs of "The Yorkshire Miners' Welfare Convalescent Homes", a charity of which Mr Scargill is chairman.

Mr Scargill was suspended as chairman and trustee by the Charity Commission last June, and the scheme has been put in place in order to allow the charity to continue to operate pending his appeal against that decision. The appeal is set to reach court this June.

The Charity Commission took its action last year against the miners' leader over the allegedly inappropriate transfer of £800,000 to the homes fund from another charity of which Mr Scargill was also a trustee.

There are no suggestions that Mr Scargill or anyone else has been involved in any impropriety, but that certain procedures had not been followed.

Meetings of the Convalescent Homes trustees were disrupted when Mr Scargill's NUM colleagues on the committee objected to new trustees being nominated by the British Coal Corporation to replace the NUM president.

The British Coal people in turn had boycotted meetings, and the Attorney General, as guardian of the public interest in the charity sector, wants an early resolution to the row.

A SENIOR member of the ruling family of Saudi Arabia is suing Courts, the Queen's bankers, over hundreds of thousands of pounds in disputed bank charges.

His Excellency Mohammed El Rashid, who has a residence at 258 Bromley Road, London, is said to be "deeply embarrassed" at having to go to law in the dis-

pute. According to sources close to His Excellency, the disputed bank fees only came to his attention in the last year. He has banked with Courts, the private banking subsidiary of NatWest, since 1983.

He issued a writ this Tuesday, and Courts has requested its lawyers with a view to settling the matter as quickly and quietly as possible, according to the sources.

Asked whether the dispute would reach court, a source close to His Excellency said yesterday: "We sincerely hope not. We hope the talks [with Courts] will reach fruition next week."

His Excellency's writ says that between June 1992 and 1996 he instructed Courts from time to time to transfer "substantial sums" from his bank account in Switzerland to his various accounts with Courts, in particular to the Courts branch at Lower Sloane Street, London via New York.

The writ says: "In total during this period some US\$10,000,000 was transferred and converted to sterling en route."

The writ continues: "The Defendant... has purported to debit the Plaintiff's account for charges allegedly incurred by him without good cause and without the authority of the Plaintiff."

His Excellency claims that despite repeated requests to Courts, the bank has failed to account properly to him by providing "a complete, accurate and intelligible account" of his accounts with Courts.

His Excellency goes on to demand an inquiry "as to what sums, if any, the Defendant has applied towards the payment of charges which were not incurred by the Plaintiff or authorised by him." The writ concludes by demanding that Courts pays whatever amount is found to be owing, plus interest.

A spokeswoman for Courts said yesterday: "Client confidentiality means we cannot confirm whether he [His Excellency] is a client of Courts."

THE Financial Services Authority (FSA) has obtained a wide-ranging *ex parte* in-

junction against Steven Rhodes, of Croft Street, London, preventing his firm, Sterling Montague and Speke, from carrying out allegedly unlicensed investment business.

The FSA obtained the injunction on 20 March and a hearing into the matter has been pencilled in for 1 April at the Royal Courts in the Strand, London.

The FSA's writ alleges that Mr Rhodes's firm made "statements, promises or forecasts which he knows to be misleading, false or deceptive and dishonestly concealed material facts and recklessly made such statements" in order to induce people to enter investment agreements. This contravened Section 47 of the Financial Services Act, the FSA claims.

The writ also claims that Mr Rhodes contravened Section 56 of the Act by "making unsolicited calls upon persons" in pursuit of investment business.

The FSA claims that Mr Rhodes contravened Section 3 of the Act by carrying on investment business without a licence.



# SPORT

Saturday 28 March 1998

## Mettle detectors head for Highbury

### Football

By Guy Hodgson

A STRAW that Alex Ferguson was able to claw from Manchester United's defeat against Arsenal a fortnight ago was that his opponents will no longer be able to hide under a cloak of anonymity. The heavy burden of anticipation will now be on Arsène Wenger's team.

Today is the first occasion the Gunners will emerge from the tunnel with genuine championship aspirations and winning now will be an altogether different thing. An anxiety to do well will colour every thought. "I looked in people's faces

and saw fear in their eyes," Tony Parkes, the Blackburn assistant manager, said recalling his side's run-in to the title three years ago. "At that point it has nothing to do with ability."

Arsenal's mettle detection begins with Sheffield Wednesday at Highbury today which will be the first of a minimum 11 games in six weeks. "We can't try any harder," Lee Dixon said, "but we relish hard work and we don't want that to be wasted by throwing away silly games."

Wednesday, who are 13th and have won only twice away this season, can safely be ascribed to the "silly" category but after that there are few fixtures that even approach the

mildly amusing. Arsenal face Bolton, Blackburn, Barnsley, Liverpool and Aston Villa on their travels while, at Highbury, Newcastle, Wimbledon, Derby and Everton are fixtures where points could easily be dropped.

Having a three-game advantage over Manchester United is all very well if you can wipe out the six-point arrears between the teams. That is easier said than done. "United have slipped up but I can't see them slipping up many more times," said Michael Hughes, who will get a close-up examination of the champions' form with Wimbledon at Old Trafford today. "If I were a betting man I'd go with United."

"Arsenal have gone on a great run but I thought the result they got against us was lucky. It's in their hands but I can't see them winning the eight or nine matches they'll need. If they do then they'll deserve to win the League."

What will be decisive is the number of first-choice players Wenger and Ferguson will be able to field for the climax and, on that count, both had reasons to be cheerful yesterday. Although Emmanuel Petit is out with a leg injury incurred playing for France in Russia, Arsenal could have Tony Adams and Ray Parlour fit as compensation.

United, meanwhile, may welcome back Ryan Giggs and Peter

Schmeichel against Wimbledon. Even Teddy Sheringham's one-match suspension is offset by Ole Gunnar Solskjær's acceleration towards his best form. The Norwegian scored for his country against Belgium in midweek and also got the goal in the 1-1 draw with Monaco 10 days ago.

"They're bound to be on a bit of a downer after going out of the European Cup," Hughes said, "but on the flip side they now know they've just got the League to go for."

That has been the case for Liverpool for some time now and their fixture at Oakwell will have a big influence on whether their Premiership's finale is exciting or a chore. They have

won only one of their last eight League games but a slip-up by the top two and suddenly their Champions' League qualification will look less remote.

That presupposes they beat Barnsley which they did last night. That is still the shock of the Premiership this season. The home side, too, are riding on an unprecedented crest of three successive wins.

Their players have the advantage of not having travelled the length and breadth of Europe in international friendlies, which is fortunate because they were close to exhaustion after beating Southampton 4-3 a fortnight ago. They have spent

the intervening time sunning themselves in Majorca.

"The players were jaded at that point," the Barnsley manager, Danny Wilson, said. "Hopefully the break will have proved beneficial and revitalised them ready for what is going to be a tough last few weeks."

Four other matches today will also help to clarify or muddy the relegation waters. Bolton have the opportunity to build on their win over Sheffield Wednesday at home to Leicester, Everton and Aston Villa will attempt to be big clubs in deed as well as reputation at Goodison while Newcastle will be hoping to be worthy of their overpriced shirts away to Southampton.

The game that has six-pointers running through the centre of it, however, is at Selhurst Park where Crystal Palace probably have to beat Tottenham to have any prospect of staying in the Premiership. Lose and they will be eight points behind Spurs, who will be without the suspended David Ginola; win and the gap will be down to two.

Attilio Lombardo's appointment as manager has coincided with a sudden surge of fitness. The Italian is available himself while Michele Padovano, Neil Shipperley and Paul Warhurst are either recovered or nearly so. Add £1m signing Sass Cerich and suddenly Palace do not look quite so hapless.

## Protests cannot dent McLarens' superiority

### Motor racing

By David Tremayne  
in São Paulo

It took Mika Hakkinen only three laps yesterday morning to underscore Ron Dennis's contention that the controversial brake bias system used on his McLaren cars is but a part of their present performance advantage.

Though they were forced to run without the system, following protests which had again thrown the sport into further confusion on Thursday night, Hakkinen and David Coulthard dominated the first session of free practice with an insouciant ease that left the rest trailing more than a second and a half behind.

Ferrari carried out their threat to protest about McLaren's brake system which allows their drivers to apply different retardational pressure to either rear wheel in corners, enhancing cornering efficiency and grip. The key issue is whether this contravenes regulations which proscribe four-wheel steering.

Jean Todt, Ferrari's sporting director, had expressed his concern over the system in Melbourne three weeks ago, during the Australian Grand Prix which McLaren dominated. With Tyrrell he lodged an official protest against McLaren as

well as the Williams and Jordan teams which have similar systems. At the same time Arrows protested against McLaren and Williams, and Sauber and Minardi protested against Jordan.

Todt reiterated his misgivings yesterday: "We think the McLaren system has a four-wheel steering function. We want to clarify what is legal according to the technical regulations and what is not."

This is seen not so much as a protest primarily against McLaren, though there are already bad feelings between the team following Ron Dennis' thinly veiled attack on the Italian team in Australia, but against the world governing body FIA and the manner in which it determines the legality of ideas presented by individual teams.

Yesterday Dennis continued to defend his system, although it had been removed on the advice of the FIA pending a meeting between the teams and the FIA stewards later yesterday evening. "Throughout the winter we have been in constant dialogue with the FIA regarding our technical ideas, and we are confident that everything we have incorporated on our new car is fully legal."

"The protest is time-consuming and a bit annoying, but clearly Ferrari is not satisfied with the interpretation of the

rules and there is a process by which they can challenge that process. I find it strange that they would want to do that, since we have complied with the system in question via endless communication."

"We will pursue the matter to the Court of Appeal if necessary. The rule book is two inches thick and we face fresh constraints every year. So if we find something within them that gives us an advantage, who on earth should anyone be surprised that we don't want to divulge any details on how it works to anybody else?"

"Those teams who want to know will find out if they challenge the system, but I do not believe that the FIA thinks the Court of Appeal is the best system by which to establish the legality of a car. The system for that already exists, and we followed it to the letter."

Ferrari, for one, clearly do not share that view. When practice resumed yesterday Coulthard and Hakkinen traded places but retained their comfortable supremacy.

It remains to be seen whether the McLarens were grandstanding in outright qualifying set-up to prove a point, but few doubt their superiority will continue in official qualifying today.



England's Graeme Hick is bowled for five by Merv Dillon of the Vice-Chancellor's XI at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown yesterday

Photograph: PA

## Stewart run spree ends in controversy after umpire fails to spot Rose no-ball

### Cricket

By Mark Baldwin  
in Barbados

ALEC STEWART'S 108 ended in controversial circumstances here yesterday as England totted 289 for 7 in their one-day warm-up match against a Vice-Chancellor's XI.

Stewart, who put on 157 in 26 overs with England's one-day captain, Adam Hogg, to revive England's innings, was bowled taking a huge swipe at Franklyn Rose because he thought it would be signalled a no-ball by the umpire Halley Moore.

But Moore ignored Stewart's appeal that only three fielders were inside the 30-yard fielding ring—a minimum of four is required in 50-over cricket—and the England coach, David Lloyd, had a word with the officials to try to clarify the situation. England's management later said that they had accepted the umpire's decision.

Stewart, who had repeatedly gestured to the umpires after being given out, walked off shaking his head in disgust. The wicketkeeper, who was England's top scorer in the recent Test series against the West Indies, hit 14 fours in a

responsible but fine 128-ball innings.

Holloake had immediately repositioned himself as England's leader in the shortened game with a 78-ball 76 that included a six out of the ground off Merv Dillon that took him to his half-century.

The Surrey pair ensured a sizeable England total, after an initial slide to 59 for 3, and in the final overs Dougie Brown and Robert Croft laid about the bowling to add 33 more runs.

Not even the sore back of Graham Thorpe meant Mike Atherton could find a place in the side that was so successful when they won the Sharjah Trophy in December.

Angus Fraser took the place of the left-hander and with Ben Hollis in for the absent Alastair Brown it meant nine of

the victorious side were playing. With their policy of packing the side with all-rounders it also meant that two players who have opened for their counties in one-day cricket—Matthew Fleming and Croft—came in at eight and nine.

Stewart and his fellow opener Nick Knight, who captained England A in Sri Lanka earlier this winter, set off at a fierce pace. Stewart took three fours off the second over, bowled by the South African guest fast bowler Victor Mpitsang.

Knight also hit three quick boundaries, off Rose, before edging a drive and being well caught behind by a diving Jeff Dujon for 14.

Dujon was one of three former West Indies Test players in this match. The Jamaican

wicketkeeper was joined by openers Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes, aged 46 and 42 respectively.

By the time Ben Hollis joined Stewart in the third over England were already 200 for after being put into bat.

The younger Hollis, brother, fresh from a superb tour with bat in Sri Lanka, promised much with a couple of sumptuous strokes, but on nine he tried to whip Mpitsang off his pads and was held backward of square.

Hick, one of six players to arrive for the one-day leg of the tour that comprises of five games against the West Indies—the first of which is here tomorrow—had made just five when he was bowled off an inside edge driving at Dillon.

Vice-Chancellor's XI won 100-100  
England  
N V Knight c Dujon b Rose 14  
M J Stewart c Rose 108  
B C Hollis c Tuckett b Mpitsang 76  
G A Hick b Dillon 76  
A J Hollis c Haynes b Rose 45  
M A Easton c Tuckett b Bennett 35  
D R Brown not out 35  
M V Fleming b Tuckett 28  
R D G Croft not out 20  
Extras (b12, w4, nb4) 20  
Total (for 7, 40 overs) 289  
Fall: 1-28, 2-46, 3-58, 4-76, 5-228, 6-246, 7-289  
Did not bat: D W Headley, A R C Fraser  
Bowling: Rose 10-0-43-3; Mpitsang 6-1-31-1; Dillon 7-0-61-1; Tuckett 6-0-32-5; Tuckett 6-0-47-0; Samner 10-0-75-1  
WEST INDIES: LOR'S XI: C G Greenidge, D L Haynes, B C Lara, S Joseph, JP J L Dujon, M B Hussain, C Tuckett, P A J De Silva, M V Dillon, F A Rose, V Mpitsang, Umptier: H Moore and M Jones.

### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3570, Saturday 28 March

By Mass

#### ACROSS

- Courage shown by copper, we hear? (6)
- Drill, corded fabric, rejected for pet (6)
- Rank nettles with a fruit in, rotting (5,10)
- A holiday to forget (5)
- What a brutish exhibition! (9)
- Crusty Southern driver (6)
- Texts establishing the Northern deity right away (6)
- Boat round NE, fruit carrier (6)
- Falls apart, I see, in depressions (6)
- A chappie, given stretch, appealed (9)
- Plant's almost divided (5)
- Prescriptions for tablets (3,12)
- Weather is penetrating lounge (6)
- Music-maker's de-canted trendy wine (6)

#### DOWN

- Suppress blunder before French article appears (6)
- Set up routine title, one amongst data for book producers (4,11)
- Resilient bright male (5)
- Pine for revenge, making moves to capture Queen? (9)
- It went west some time ago (7,8)
- Pretty creature, that girl (6)
- In time sect causes anxiety (6)
- Boat round NE, fruit carrier (6)
- Cruel wisecrack to provoke and cut (9)
- Punctual trains into Maine (2,4)
- Formal stylist's puff about edition (6)
- One's life with gold is divine (6)
- Walks, say, with outwardly drunken list (4,2)
- Brown artist's squeezed out for animal (5)

Friday's solution  
Last Saturday's solution

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD  
No. 3570, Saturday 28 March  
By Mass

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hundredth copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to: Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: G Smith, Reading; J Jolly, Middlesbrough; M Hicks, London NW2; M Wallace, Fife; M Dickson, Maccles.

SPY/100/150



# TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 28 March 1998



PICTURE OF THE WEEK Spring by Brian Harris. To order a 12x9in print (price £5) call 071-293 2534

## Week in, week out

William Hartston reveals how God foiled a plot by American-Italians to corner the market in pineapples using elephant dung

God did not appear on television this week. Italian men are having to be taught how to seduce women. The clocks go forward tonight. It has been a terrible week for elephants. To any casual browser of this week's news, those stories may seem unconnected. Yet a deeper analysis of the issues behind them suggests some compelling links.

war between elephants and pineapple-growers. Police are looking for suspects who may have been involved in the elephant's death. Every dry season, the pineapple farmers face problems with marauding elephants. As their own food supply dwindles, the beasts come lumbering out of the forest in the evenings to pinch pineapples from farms situated on their former feeding grounds. In this El Niño-ravaged year, the drought has been particularly bad and farmers have been setting well-studded traps to keep the elephants away or disable them.

Surely a mutually beneficial deal could be struck between the elephants and farmers to swap fruit for manure? Perhaps they could try this tusk-tie-up on the Ivory Coast, which - as our story overleaf explains - moves closer to Gatwick this weekend. And just along the west African coast in Nigeria this week, elephants have been frightening villagers in the town of Yankari by coming close to people's homes and chewing on the baobab trees. Thanks to anti-poaching efforts, the elephant population in the area has doubled in the past 10 years, but conservationists are worried about the growing tension between elephants and villagers.

The growing Nigerian elephant population may seem an innocent enough story as it stands, yet on the very same day came a report from Italy that the Socio-Psychological Institute in the city of Udine is offering two-day courses in seduction for 300,000 lire (£100). Italian men, apparently, are facing a crisis be-

cause they no longer know how to seduce women. What, you may ask, has this to do with elephants? For the final link we must go back to 19 December 1996. That fateful day marked the first death by herpes of an African elephant. The herpes virus had long been common among Asian elephants, but

this fatality in Oakland Zoo, California, was the first in the African species. Oakland zookeepers were said to be "at a loss to explain" how he had contracted the virus, although an Asian elephant had not long before died from herpes at the same zoo.

The elephantine herpes, however, may be seen as divine retribution, because 1996 was also the year when milk supplies ran out in northern India as the Hindu faithful took gallons of the stuff to a statue of the elephant god Ganesha, which had supposedly been seen drinking milk.

And that may provide the link with the other major story of the week: the non-arrival, on Channel 18 in the United States, of God. According to Hon-Ming Chen, leader of a 150-member Taiwanese spiritual sect, God was to have appeared on television immediately after midnight on Wednesday morning to announce that he would descend to earth next week, at 10am on 31 March in the Dallas suburb of Garland. So certain were the sect, that many members, including Chen himself, had bought up property in the Garland area. When the television programmes proceeded as normal, Chen emerged from his home to tell reporters he had been wrong. "Since God's appearance on television has not been realised," he said through an interpreter, "you can take what we have preached as nonsense. I would rather you don't believe what I say any more." He does, however, still believe that God will descend to earth to save hundreds of millions of people from a nuclear holocaust in 1999 by taking them to another planet in flying saucers.

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SIMON CALDER

**Faster planes for UK flyers!** From tomorrow, the journey time on many flights from Manchester to Heathrow will be cut. The early morning British Airways Shuttle flight shaves 15 minutes off the previous schedule, reducing the journey time to just an hour. Has BA decided to put its much-underused Concorde on the route? "No," says a spokesman for the airline. "Minor adjustments are always made at the changeover from winter to summer schedules."

Is it merely a coincidence that these improvements are being made on exactly the same day that British Airways loses its monopoly on the Manchester-Heathrow route? Tomorrow, British Midland starts eight flights a day between the two airports. The new airline plans a journey time as short as 55 minutes; BA denies that it is trimming published schedules just to challenge the new competition, even though it will be using exactly the same Boeing and flying to precisely the same overcrowded airport as before.

Travellers from Scotland will find their services on British Midland curtailed because of the new route and subsequent transfer of resources. But do we really need all these alternatives? In the past six months, travellers between Manchester and the capital have acquired the added choice of four flights to London City on KLM uk, as well as 16 Virgin trains and a wayward Wales & West service every day – not to mention numerous National Express buses.

It's not as if the head-to-head competition between BA and British Midland is having a dramatic effect on fares; if you want to travel from London to Manchester and back next weekend, the lowest fare on both airlines is £28 (more than four times the cheapest rail ticket).

As these two pages reveal, British Airways is expanding its flights from Gatwick, including a new service to Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire. Yet I believe this latter route is in fact a re-establishment of an earlier service. French Caledonian (catch line, until the takeover by BA: "We never forget you have a choice") used to operate to West Africa.

When I was a security guard frisking passengers at Gatwick airport in the late Seventies, it was easy to envy travellers jetting off to the four corners of the world. The only ones I felt sorry for were those cramping aboard a tiny BAC 1-11, destination Abidjan. This was not the non-stop that British Airways starts flying tomorrow, but an "all stations to Africa" service that called, if memory serves me right, at Madrid, Tangier, Dakar, Banjul and Accra. Did anyone ever travel on this, and are they back yet? Let me know.

**My Continental Airlines** flight to Mexico for the report on Cancun was a little late leaving Gatwick, but the choice of what Americans call "de-planing music" seemed unnecessarily self-critical: Carol King's greatest hit, "It's Too Late". Looking at the airline's Go Forward plan to "Make Reliability a Reality", I remembered why punctuality is a company obsession: "Employees receive a \$100 bonus for any month when Continental ranks first in on-time arrivals".

# Tinkling along the Ivory

Once he cut through the masses of red tape, Stephen Wells found a warm African welcome in the former French colony of Côte d'Ivoire.

The airport official had a pistol at his side, and looked menacing. Tentatively I pleaded: "But my guidebook said I didn't need a visa." Unimpressed, he led me into his office. They said Africa was all about meeting people, but this was probably not what they had in mind. French is the official language of this ex-colony, so I tried to resurrect my A-level skills and searched in my phrase book for "I'm new around here. Let me know when I am supposed to bribe you, monsieur."

I paid for my error in time rather than money. After a few hours of mind-melting bureaucracy, I was allowed out on condition that I spent the next two days visiting every civil service department in town, collecting all manner of stamps and signatures.

Outside the airport that will welcome the first DC-10 direct from Gatwick tomorrow, Côte d'Ivoire is a vivacious country bursting with energy. The people are complete jokers, the sun shines, and it is a fresh fruit fiesta. Men wear long robes called *boubous* and the women are wrapped in endless tracts of dazzling material. A few surprises have to be expected, though. Not many people come here, so the guidebooks can be rather dated. You are more likely to bump into Andy Kershaw than Jill Dando.

I began my walking tour of Abidjan, hoping to take in some of the other attractions apart from the government offices. This, the most prosperous French colony, used to be called the Paris of West Africa. It is a modern city with skyscrapers, supermarkets and traffic jams.

There are plenty of reasonable places to stay for just a few pounds. If you want opulence, then there is the famous Hôtel Ivoire for about £50 a night. The city is next to a 100-mile-long lagoon, on the other side of which is the old capital of Grand-Bassam. Here there are limitless stretches of tranquil Atlantic beaches with faded colonial houses among the palm trees. The sleepy remains of a bygone era give the place a relaxing, timeless air.

Although it is called the "Ivory Coast", there are not the masses of wildlife that you find in East Africa. The main attraction is meeting people and this is best done away from Abidjan. So, visas in hand, my friend and I abandoned luxury and headed inland. We found a gradual transition in washing facilities, from *en-suite* bathrooms to *en-corridor* bathrooms to *en-bucket* bathrooms. The road system was good, though, and we took a bus for 150 miles for 2,000CFA (about £3).

Most countries in what used to be French West Africa have the CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) as their currency. French francs can be changed anywhere, but outside Abidjan you may as well throw away your dollars, sterling and traveller's cheques.

We bought a wooden set of African backgammon called *awala* and acquired a never-ending source of friends.

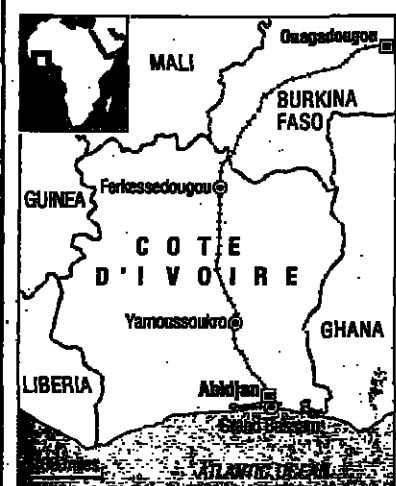
If French had not been widely spoken then we would have been lost, since every town seems to have its own local language.

Ivorians are a hospitable bunch, and we were invited to stay with several families. We were served a traditional meal of *assiki* (a cassava tuber dried, grated and steamed into submission to produce a type of couscous). It is meant to be eaten with the hands. This was clearly impossible, so we entertained our hosts by making an irredeemable mess of our clothes, then wiping ourselves down with some disposable traveller's cheques.

For dessert there was fried plantain. The huge fruit are like savoury bananas on steroids.

Then we left for Yamoussoukro, which became the capital 15 years ago. Houphouët-Boigny (let's call him Hoofy for now), the president from independence in 1960 until his death in 1993, decided that it would be nice to have his home village as the capital. I guess it made juggling state commitments and visiting the relatives easier. He ploughed a vast amount of money into it, but all my favourite government departments have stayed in Abidjan.

## INTO THE IVORY COAST



### Getting there

The new British Airways non-stop flight from Gatwick to Abidjan begins tomorrow and operates on Wednesdays and Sundays thereafter. The lowest official fare direct from the airline is £902, but through discount agents such as Bridge the World (0171-911 0900) it is being sold for £539 (including taxes) from April to June.

### More information

British passport holders require a visa. To get one, write to the Embassy of the Côte d'Ivoire, 2 Upper Belgrave Street, London SW1 (0171-235 6991). You must complete two application forms, supply two photographs and pay £40.

The city has a presidential palace, surrounded by a crocodile-filled moat, and a virtually empty luxury hotel called (surprisingly) Hotel President. The most amazing construction here is the basilica. It is almost identical to St Peter's in the Vatican, and is the tallest church in Christendom. It is a bizarre sight, rising out of the African bush. It cost a staggering £200m and has 36 stained-glass windows, hand-blown by the best makers in France, stretching up 30 metres from the floor. If you foolishly think that Africa is nothing but mud huts, then this is the place to come.

Out of the equatorial sun, we relished the air conditioning, whilst admiring the beautiful marble and granite. Finding a free seat was no problem; there were 7,000 of them, and only a handful of people worshipping.

Since Hoofy's death, there has been a relatively smooth transition to a democratically elected leader with more down-to-earth ideas and a more pronounceable surname.

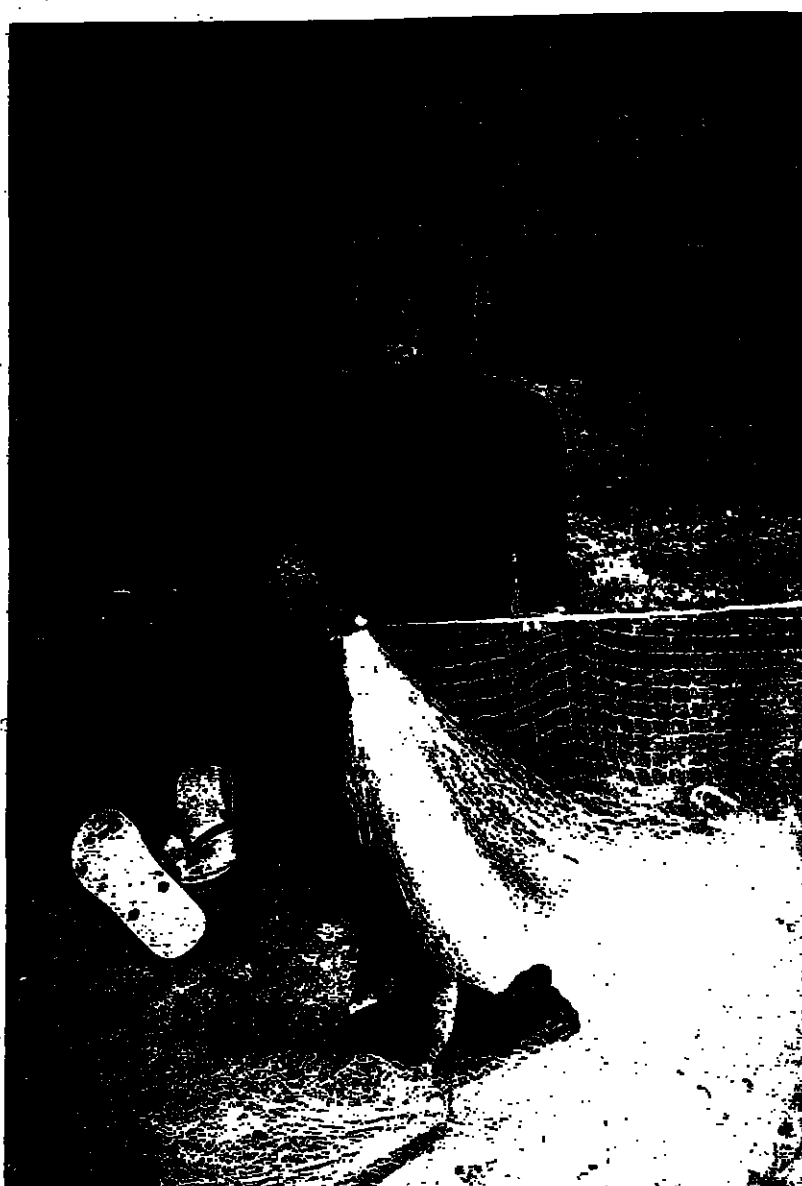
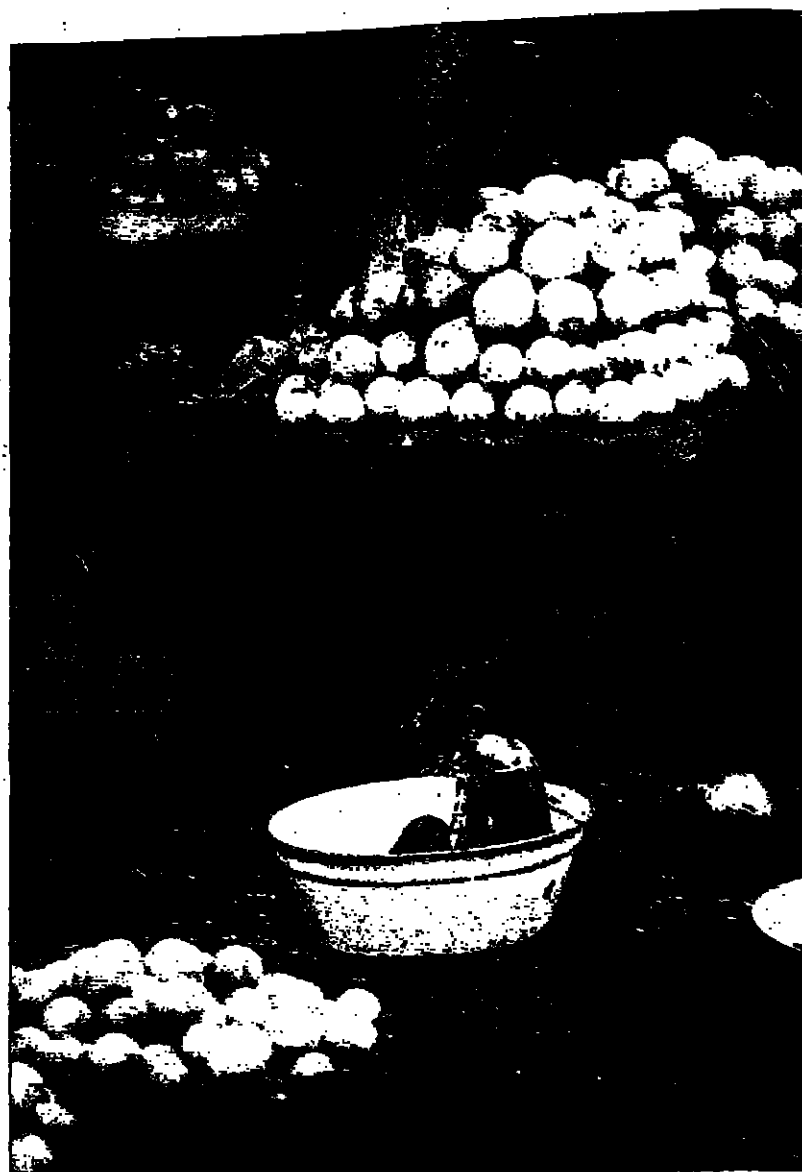
To travel further north we took the train. Its state of repair has freewheeled downhill for many years but it is still called the Express (that Ivorian humour again). The scenery changes from patches of rainforest to open savannah. Sellers assault the train at every station and women come up with mountainous trays of mangoes on their heads. When the sun beats down, a mango hat is definitely worth having. You can buy your own body weight of bananas for next to nothing, provided you are not paying in dollars.

The train journey was rather confusing since all towns seem to end in "dougou". We passed Ngolodougou, Komborodougou and Ferkessidougou. The train was heading for Ouagadougou, across the border in Burkina Faso, but we got off at Ouagadougou, solely on the grounds of its having, to our Western eyes, the most ridiculous name.

One day there will be souvenir stands here selling T-shirts with "I've taken the Ouagadougou choo-choo". Nearby there are bustling markets, where we haggled for carved wooden masks and painted cloths. It is a nice area to while away the time, and perfect for eating insects if you have not yet admitted defeat and accepted the spoon offered to foreigners.

Eventually we reached the border with Mali. Land borders are much less hassle than airports. An Ivorian woman on our bus did not have the right papers, so paid for a pillion ride on the back of a scooter through the bush, and rejoined the road a few miles past the customs post.

Côte d'Ivoire is a rewarding country to visit. The travelling is easy and cheap. The climate is cooler than you may imagine, with temperatures generally only in the high twenties all year round, and you can stay healthy if you take the usual precautions. The people are welcoming, but unless government offices particularly fascinate you, it is probably best to buy a visa before you go.



Faces of the Ivory Coast: the main attraction is meeting people – Abidjan market, top, and fishing port, above. Photographs: Robert Harding

## Excellent holiday. That's the one your suitcase had ...

Have you heard the one about the bloke from Leicester who saved all his supermarket tokens for a dream ticket to New York? Well, the holiday was great but on the way back he was just dozing off when a stewardess accidentally chucked a glass of red wine into his lap. Our man was reassured that if he removed all his clothes and temporarily donned a First Class sleep-suit, the cabin crew would have his trousers dry in time for touchdown. But it was bad news for breakfast. The stewardess came to confess that the slacks were dry but extensively stained, so he was welcome to leave the aircraft in his complimentary pyjamas.

Past the fixed grin at the plane door, past the puzzled looks on the long walk to immigration, forced to re-enter Britain in bedwear, all that kept him going was the thought of slipping into something more suitable when he was eventually reunited with his luggage. But guess what? His bag wasn't there. He was forced to stride casually

When your luggage gets lost, what does an airline do? Heap indignity on inconvenience, writes Liz Kershaw

through customs in night attire, with nothing to declare but his embarrassment.

The airline reluctantly suggested he went shopping in London. He could claim back what he spent. Sorry, but his ordeal through Heathrow had convinced him that he wasn't up to a stroll down Oxford Street. He pleaded for a taxi home but that was refused, and so, with only what he stood up in – white lightweight polycotton with the airline's logo embroidered across his chest – he set out by Tube to catch the train to the Midlands. It was raining at Leicester station, and as he tried to get a taxi his corporate casuals became disturbingly clingy and transparent.

Imagine his surprise when he finally shut his front door behind him and saw that his

suitcase had beaten him to it. Located while he was making his case in Terminal 3, it had been whisked home in a nice warm car.

Up to last year I had never fully appreciated the horror of lost luggage. It was something that happened to other people. A bit of a giggle. Made a good story.

Until the day I spent shuffling around the poshest hotel I'd ever been to in my life. I was a paying guest, and should have been enjoying the sparkling pool or a pristine sun lounger. Instead I looked like a bag lady without a bag, because Caymanair had managed to get me to Grand Cayman, but not my clothes.

Then, in Dublin last spring, I spent two days without the bare essentials while Aer Lingus tried to track down my artist's port-

folio. I've never been known to put paint to paper; in fact I was missing a bright red vanity case. It took a few phone calls to sort that out, but I had plenty of time while skulking in my hotel room wishing I'd held on to one of those emergency tooth brushes they give you on planes.

Last November, on a trip to Orkney, my bag full of thermals and sturdy outerwear stayed put at Heathrow while I arrived in Kirkwall in a fancy suit and handbag. It was very windy and very cold. They were not my favourite airline. Next morning, crumpled and smelly, I went shopping.

Recently, as I inched my way bleary-eyed off a flight from Miami, I was invited to make myself known on leaving the aircraft. I was quite excited to be greeted by a grinning guy with a golden tan and easy smile set off by his red and gold regalia, looking every inch the game show host. He greeted me enthusiastically. I was enthralled. Was I the lucky winner of a holiday? No. The

game was Spot Your Luggage and their answer to Bob Monkhouse had come to tell me that on that great carousel of fortune in the sky I'd landed on "Lose everything again". All my bags were still in the States. Go direct to baggage reclaim. Do not pass through. Do not collect anything. Do not expect anything. Go straight home and we'll be in touch.

After a stand-off with a freshly groomed duty manager, with two small, sleepy children clinging to my shorts, and just the bags under my eyes, we went home in a taxi. A couple of calls to customer services, and our cases arrived 31 hours later. The following day came an apology and travel vouchers for £200. Our man in Leicester was eventually offered a trip to New York. Nice – but all we really wanted was a bit of sympathy and practical help at the time of need.

Meanwhile I'm working out where in the world I can go with £200 and one piece of hand baggage.

£98  
6 days plus

Now you can afford to take the whole squad to France this summer.

£55  
5 Day return



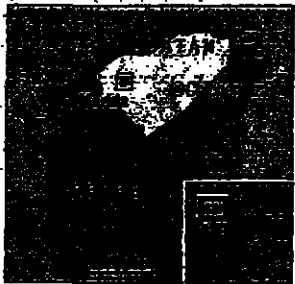
le Shuttle

Supervener bookings must be made 1 day in advance and by the 31st March 1998.

الاحول من الاحول



# Cancún: Mexico's last resort



A brand-new scheduled flight to Mexico's main Caribbean resort opens up the Yucatán Peninsula to travellers. But the excesses on the island drove Simón Calder to drink; tequila, inevitably

Here's a tip for the pilot of the first-ever British Airways flight from Cancún to Gatwick, which takes off this Monday: do the beach departure. It'll guarantee a plane load of pleased passengers and a placid flight back to Gatwick.

The punters should be content, anyway. Mexico's main Caribbean resort is one of those rare places where, whatever you want from a journey, you will probably find it.

If you desire merely to toast on the beach, tinkle by the pool and taste nothing riskier than a burger, stay put on the beach stripe of hotels, restaurants and shopping malls that constitutes the Isla Cancún. But allow yourself, and your attention, to drift along the beach past the Sheraton, and you may get caught up in one of the tangled tales of this strange corner of the world: sprouting from an ancient plug of limestone is the Mayan temple of the scorpion. Any-one caring to glance up from their pool-side piña colada sees that tourists are trespassing on the territory of one of the world's greatest civilisations.

Some, no doubt, will use the new air route as a stepping-stone to get deeper into Mayan life. But they, too, should dawdle in Cancún and gawp at what passes for civilisation at the back end of the 20th century.

Travel writers are fond of trotting out the truism that Cancún was selected by computer - in the early Seventies, the story goes, the Mexican authorities ran a program to identify the ideal spot to develop tourism on the Caribbean coast. Yet even in those technologically olden days, you wouldn't have needed so much as a Sinclair ZX81 to work out that a 12-mile strip of golden sand with the Caribbean sea on one side and a tropical lagoon on the other might prove to be a pretty good place to plant a resort.

My National Geographic map of the Yucatán Peninsula, dated 1970, shows a blank sheet of sand dangling from the eastern-most point in Mexico. By the end of the century Isla Cancún will eclipse Mexico City as the richest, ritziest place in this wide and wonderful country.

Sunglasses are mandatory - first, to defend your eyes against the blazing tropical sun that dances down to play high-energy hopscotch between the ultra-white sand and eerily blue sea; later, to shade the neon that dazzles through the warm breath of a Caribbean dusk. Almost every yard along the spine of the island is filled with heavy-duty tourism infrastructure: dozens of big, brash hotels, interlaced with familiar names such as the Hard Rock Café and TGI Friday's. A frenzy of feeding, and more particularly drinking, takes place each evening.

Close your eyes and you think you could easily be in Florida: open them again and you will be convinced that you've slipped through a time-space puncture and arrived in the vicinity of Daytona Beach, especially at this time of year, when the "spring break" crowds are in town: these under-21 refugees from harsh US licensing laws take advantage of Mexico's relaxed attitude to alcohol to get sozzled in the sun for a weekend or a week. Forget lager louts; tequila tear-aways are much more intimidating.

You get the strong impression that some of them don't know they're in a foreign country, and regard Mexico as just a wayward US state - they don't even need a passport to get in. If you feel mischievous, conduct a survey among your fellow guests to see if they can identify where they are. "I'm in Nirvana, man", was the closest guess of a Kansas student staggering out of the latest eating/drinking/shopping complex.

Not that I have any grounds to feel superior; I'm writing this on the verandah of the Outback Steakhouse, having trawled the length of the island in a vain attempt to find some friendly Mexicans with whom

to drink and dine. Not a single *cantina* has survived the onslaught, so instead of nibbling nachos I am tucking into a bonzer burger at Cancún's first Australian restaurant. It's time to leave.

Departure takes approximately 30 seconds, the frequency of buses roaring back and forth along the strip. Three pesos (20p), 30 minutes and lots of g-forces later, you cross the bridge to the mainland and are deposited in the town of Cancún - a genuine Mexican community that wisely keeps its distance from the *faux* Florida on the island. The ambient noise here is of animated tiffs rather than amplified riffs. Real dogs scavenge among awkward concrete architecture of the "oh, we'll finish it off later" school of building, while a hilariously Heath Robinson machine in the chumbers out the blank discs of corn that constitute the hub of a Mexican diet: tortillas. On the main square, the sharply defined faces of the descendants of the Maya smile as they offer you said tortillas, deep fried and wrapped around cheeses and chicken.

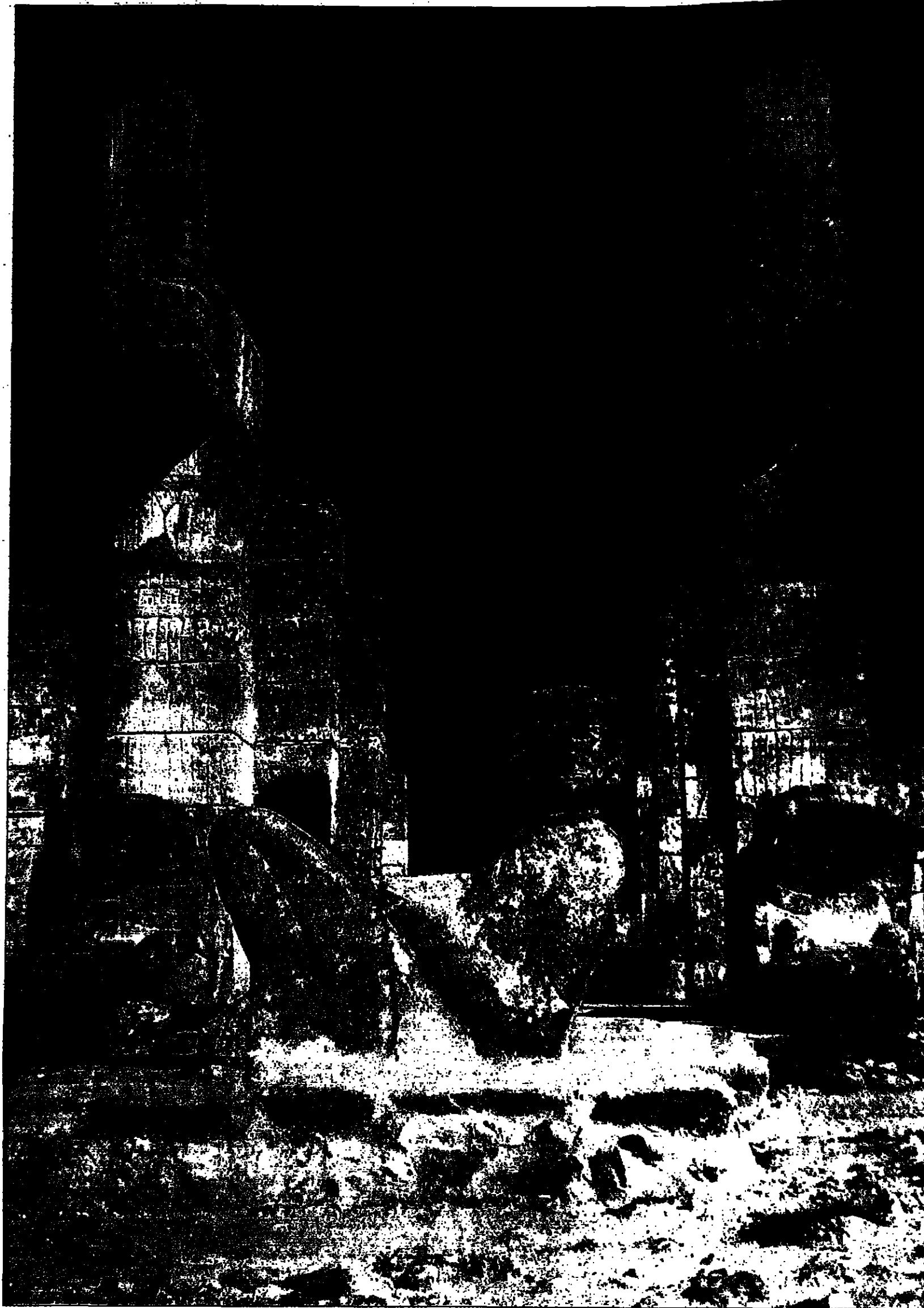
Along the street at one of a rabble of bars, a friendly local will correct your tequila technique. Forget the lime and salt performance; here, they alternate swigs of the fiery cactus spirit with gulps of sangrita, a spicy tomato concoction. The routine is a bit like mixing a bloody Mary in your stomach, only jollier.

And the vast remainder of Mexico beyond the resort is a bit like Cancún, only much jollier. A 40-minute ferry ride takes you across to pepper-shaped Isla Mujeres: literally the island of women, though the genders seem balanced aboard this splinter of rock. Unlike the adjacent island, normal life has never relinquished control. Within moments of landing, you can hear the shrieks from a school playground - and you realise that the artificial resort you have left behind is devoid of such natural phenomena as children. The island's only town looks as though some errant kids have got hold of a giant painting set and plastered each house in increasingly bright colours. Who needs neon when the sun sets alight a dazzling aquamarine apartment block, just along from that impossibly orange café? A rare blank wall has been cheered up by a mauve *Viva la revolución*. If you hop only as far as this island, your whole trip will have been worthwhile.

Try, though, the ride along the most boring road in the world. The highway east towards Mérida and Mexico City strides through wearisome uniformity. The Yucatán Peninsula is as flat as a punctured airbed, a slab of low-level limestone dressed in spindly forest at the sunblasted end of the dry season. Now and again the fragile crust collapses to form a *cenote*, a giant and mystically circular well, but such secrets are concealed from the autopista. It droves on for two or three hours before you spot what seems to be a thumbail appearing on the horizon.

The closer you get, the more your jaw drops at the audacious apparition: the main pyramid at Chichén Itzá, the finest Mayan site in Mexico. Check in at one of the overpriced fleapits in the straggly adjacent village of Pisté, and rise at dawn. Get to the site five minutes before it officially opens at 8am, and hope that the chaps on the gates let you in a little early. Then sprint to the 80-ft summit of a 1,000-year-old structure, called El Castillo ("the castle") by the awe-struck Spanish conquistadores.

From the top you will gawp - either at the sight of such a perfectly preserved city, or because the 60-degree rake of the steps makes you feel a tad insecure. Your head may also swim at the thought that the features of this pyramid - steps, terraces and panels - are denominated to describe the mathematically meticulous Mayan calendar.



Temple of the Warriors, Chichén Itzá, (main picture); a *cenote* (right), where the fragile limestone crust of the Yucatán has collapsed; Cancún Island, ancient and modern (above). Main photograph: MPL Fogden/Bruce Coleman; above and right, Simón Calder

As the arithmetical city begins to swarm with visitors, join the swirl and try to make sense of the ancient ball courts - gigantic arenas, bigger (and possibly in better nick) than Cancún airport - and civic buildings whose stern formality sneers at the feeble assaults of time and the elements. You will leave Chichén Itzá humbled, acutely aware of just how temporary and shallow are you and your fellow tourists.

Back on the beach at Cancún, anyone gazing skywards may see more aeronautical activity than just a biplane towing a banner proclaiming the benefits of Pond's cosmetics. At the airport, demand a window seat on the left of the plane and hope for a pilot in a good mood. The captain of the much-delayed Boeing subdued a plane full of hot, bothered passengers by soothingly promising: "Ladies and gentlemen, for

your pleasure we're going to make the beach departure." Huh, I thought grumpily, the pilot just means that the wind direction obliges him to take off towards the sea.

Three minutes later the plane, and my opinion of Continental Airlines, changed course by 180 degrees. Suddenly we were gliding along at 2,000ft around the foot of the island, then following the beach every

inch of the way. "See if you can spot your hotel," recommended the captain.

I cheated a bit: looked for the temple of the scorpion instead, and found it cowering between giant cathedrals of indulgence. But from this distance, Mexico's last resort took on a uniform magnificence.

At ground level you would scarcely have credited it, but, gradually, even the island of Cancún began to look beautiful.

## CANCUN CONNECTIONS

**Getting there**  
Simón Calder paid £455 for a Continental Airlines Gatwick-Cancún ticket, via Houston. The new direct flight on British Airways (0345 222111) costs more than £600 if you book direct, but through agencies such as Journey Latin America (0181-747 3108) the fare for April is £467, including UK and Mexican taxes. Note that the fare can be combined with a Mexico City flight at the same fare. Charters are also available from Gatwick and Manchester. They are mostly sold as part of package holidays,

by operators such as First Choice (0161-745 7000), Airtours (0541 500479) and Thomson (0990 502580).

**Red tape**  
Visitors require a tourist card, which is issued free by the airline, or at the frontier if you enter by land.

**More information**  
Mexican Ministry of Tourism, 60 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DS (0171-734 1058). Note that this office takes a substantial siesta, closing each day from 1.30pm to 3pm.



## A plane

Warning for intending transatlantic travellers who haven't yet booked for flights to the US before Easter: it could be too late. For the first three months of this year, airlines have been offering lower fares than ever before. As a result, flights between now and Tuesday (the last day of March) are fully booked even for those prepared to pay full fares. And once April begins, the pre-Easter rush means space is still at a premium. Flight specialists say that the only significant spaces are on indirect routes (Air France via Paris) or less desirable airlines, such as British Airways and Air India.



**A train**  
Anglia Railways (01473 693469) is offering a "London Evening Out" ticket for two people travelling together, costing £12 from Ipswich and £18 from Norwich. You can travel south on the 4.05pm from Norwich or later, and return on one of the last two trains of the evening or on the first one the following morning. Book by 2pm the day before.

**A boat**  
Britain's biggest holiday company, Thomson, should be undergoing flotation in May; in any event, it can send you floating around the Caribbean. The company (0990 502562) has taken an allocation on a Norwegian Cruise Line vessel, *Norwegian Sea*, and is offering a Jewels of the Caribbean cruise over the summer, beginning at Santo Domingo and calling in at St Lucia, Antigua, St Maarten, St Thomas and San Juan. Prices range from £859 to £1,505.

**A drink**  
Think twice before taking duty-free booze on that cruise. The Thomson brochure warns that

the vessel "prohibits passengers from bringing their own alcoholic beverages aboard; any duty-free purchases will be held by the purser's office, and returned to guests at the end of their cruise."

**A meal**  
"A genuine desert-island setting with the sand between your toes and *makuti* (palm-thatch) above your head. The traditional meal comprises marinated fish and coconut, fabulous-tasting whole crabs steamed in ginger, followed by barbecued fish with Swahili sauce, accompanied by coconut rice and chapatis". This review of the Wasini Island Restaurant, at the

far south of the Kenyan coast, is taken from *Essential Kenya*, out this week from AA Publishing. Other titles in the new series cover Prague, California and Bali & Lombok, each priced at £4.99.

**A room**  
... in Sydney costs more from Wednesday, when accommodation tax rises to 7 per cent to cover the cost of the 2000 Olympics.

**A week from now**  
... the Edinburgh Folk Festival is getting under way at various venues around the city. Call the Queen's Hall box office on 0131-668 2019.

**A month from now**  
... the latest addition to the Disney empire will be receiving its first visitors. Disney's Animal Kingdom promises to "tell the story of all animals - real, imaginary and extinct - with thrilling attractions, dramatic landscapes and close encounters with exotic creatures". The park is at the Walt Disney World Resort, near Orlando.

**A year from now**  
... the new face of Butlin's "Family Entertainment Resorts" will be revealed. The former holiday camps at Bognor Regis, Minehead and Skegness are being refurbished, and are due to open at Easter 1999.

**LOTTOAID**  
The winning LottoAid numbers for drawdate 26.3.98 are:  
1st 021253 2nd 021903 3rd 021842 4th 021608 5th 021879  
75% of all proceeds from LottoAid go directly to fund ActionAid's fight against world poverty.  
For details of how to play, please telephone the helpline on 0960 62972  
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**WORLD COVER**  
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A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a person's face, heavily shadowed and grainy, with a bright, circular highlight on the forehead.

For a watery insight into Windermere – fish, pond skaters and all – Sarah Collins and her two sons visited the Lakeside Aquatorium in Cumbria. They talked to **Jon Winter**

**Facilities:** full access for the disabled. A well stocked shop has all manner of watery souvenirs and toys. There is no café or toilet inside the Aquarium; visitors are directed towards a coffee shop and toilets nearby.

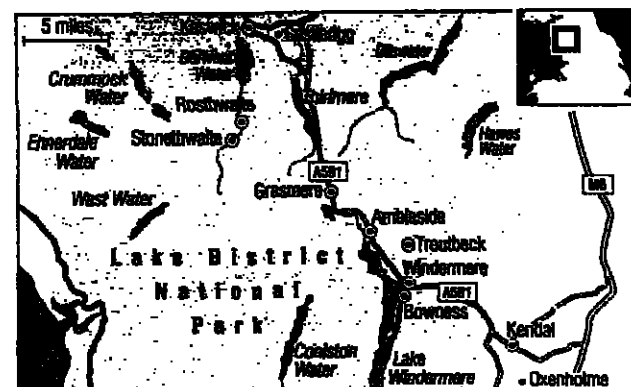
**Weekend walk:**  
**Matthew Brace**  
explores a stretch  
from Rosthwaite to  
Stonethwaite that  
provides the perfect  
introduction to  
Lakeland tramping

This is Borrowdale, deep in the heart of the Lake District. It can be a mournful place when the skies are low but at the same time a haven of peace and

This four-mile walk, the Stonethwaite Stroll for want of

If you choose Rosthwaite walk back to the northern en-

**What to take**  
Kendal Mint Cake  
OS Landranger Map No 89  
Waterproofs



**01753 47 55 47**

**IDYLIC COTTAGE** overlooking Coniston Water and Fells. Log fire, CH, sips 2-6. Eastern and lake spring view. Tel: 015394 41110

**JUST FOR TWO:** 17C barn. Log fire, CH, Gdn, Peace & quiet. Just above Easter valley 01229 899643

**KISWICK & ULLSWATER.** Superior quality holiday homes, close to lake. Great views. Sips 2-22. 015394 41110

The space race is a lie. Only President Kennedy, you, your brigade and the Soviets know that it's really an arms race - for alien technology. With increasingly fantastic and brutal weaponry, the cold war gets hot as you fight from planet to planet for your country's and democracy's survival. A multiplayer first person combat action/strategy game set in the

**Q: What was the name of the comet seen last year visible with the naked eye?**

**Call 0930 563402**

*Holiday is based on two people sharing and must be taken by 31/12/98. Subject to availability. Bookings are available from all good computer stores.*

**Call 0930 563402**

closed at random after hours close 30 March 1998  
as apply. Editor's choice



# 48 hours in Cumbria

Each week, 'The Independent' provides a prescription for the perfect weekend break. This week, the heart of Cumbria, where Simon Calder spends a bracing two days

**Why go now?**  
Daffodils: millions of them, fluttering and dancing in a Wordsworthian flourish all across this beautiful county. The last will probably expire by Easter, when - as the stern warnings on No Parking signs imply - the visitor season begins in earnest. Or you might just want to irritate the local writer Gavin D Smith, who writes in his *Alternative View of the Land of the Lakes* that "The best Lake District tourists are the Norwegians. We only get eight of them a year."

**Bearn down**  
Kendal, the town saddled with the slogan "Gateway to the Lakes" is a sheep's throw from the M6, and a longish downhill walk from Oxenholme station. This itinerary is based, quite tightly, on the road that forms the spine of the Lakes: the A591, which runs from Kendal to Keswick. Much of the intense beauty of the area, which so attracted Wordsworth and his cronies, lies along (or more particularly to either side of) this road.

**Check in**  
The Old England Hotel (01539 442444) in Bowness and the Youth Hostel in Ambleside (01539 432304) both offer a fine prospect of Windermere. Having stayed at both, bed and breakfast at the latter seems rather better value at £13.65 single compared with £55 single/£90 double. An option at the northern end of the area is Market Place in Keswick, where competition keeps prices down, at least off-season. Blackboards outside the King's Arms (01768 772083) offer B&B at a standby rate of £26 per night.

**Take a ride**  
Traffic congestion is terrible, with most of the 15 million annual visitors arriving by car. The places recommended here can be reasonably easily reached by the 555 bus between Keswick and Kendal. Call 01228 606000 for times; note that while there are 10 departures daily Monday-Saturday, the bus runs only five times a day on Sundays.

**Take a hike**  
Yes, but where? If you are serious hill walker, you will already have the ideas, the equipment and the 1:25,000 maps. For a gentle hike, see Matthew Brice's walk opposite; meanwhile here's a plan for more metropolitan strollers, like me: Keswick is much more of a proper town, and much less crowded, than many of the towns and villages farther south in Cumbria. Start at the Market Place, where the handsome Rawnsley Hall holds court - and, indeed, used to be where villains were both tried and imprisoned. Walk south and you reach the breathtaking Alhambra Cinema on St John Street, whose radiant terracotta

leaps out from the slate grey of the surroundings (and, probably, the sky). Continue onwards and upwards for a mile or so, and you can wander lonely as a cloud around the Casterigg stone circle. Or head the other way, and you can sharpen up at the Cumberland Pencil Museum.

**Lunch on the run**  
Just a few shavings away, at 32 Main Street, Keswick, the Kingfisher does the best fish and chips I could find, accompanied by tea and bread and butter, for £4.25.

**Cultural afternoon**  
Whether you yomp or take the bus, the journey south to Grasmere is superb - skirting Thirlmere (the most beautiful reservoir ever devised by Manchester Corporation), peaking at Dummil Raise and sweeping breezily past Rydal Mount to Wordsworth's most celebrated residence, Dove Cottage. Get there before last admission (5pm) and make sure you take a tour to see where he lay "in vacant or in pensive mood", and to get the lowdown on the less humane side of the poet. Then amble along the old road over the hills to Ambleside.

**Window shopping**  
When I reached a dozen outdoor equipment shops in Ambleside I stopped counting; this represents one for every 100 inhabitants. These establishments are always on the look-out for imaginative sales techniques: one shop has a board outside saying "I wandered lonely as a cloud, but then I thought 'Nah, stuff it' and went shopping".

**An aperitif**  
There are only slightly fewer pubs than outdoor suppliers in Ambleside, and all of them are warm and welcoming. You could phone one of the 19 Wordsworths listed in the local directory and see if they fancy coming out for a drink. But you may decide to go for a digestif in one instead, so you can take advantage of the dinner deal.

**Demure dinner**  
Zeffirelli's, anchored to the western side of the Ambleside one-way system, is that rare combination of pizzeria and cinema. For less than £15 you get a three-course dinner and a ticket for one of the two screens in the concise cinema beneath the restaurant. The sun-dried tomato in the Mediterranean pizza may be the closest you get to solar energy in the Lakes. Then you can descend to watch *Titanic* sink.

**Sunday morning: go to church**  
Troutbeck is a crumpled, wind-whipped village a couple of miles inshore from Windermere, and the Jesus Church is set beneath it in the valley. It takes a while to find, but the effort is rewarded by one of the most sublime churches in England. The leading Pre-Raphaelites came here on holiday once, and left their exquisite mark on the east window, which bears Burne-Jones's and William Morris's flamboyant signatures.

**A walk in the park**  
You're already in one. Most of this area is part of the National Park established in

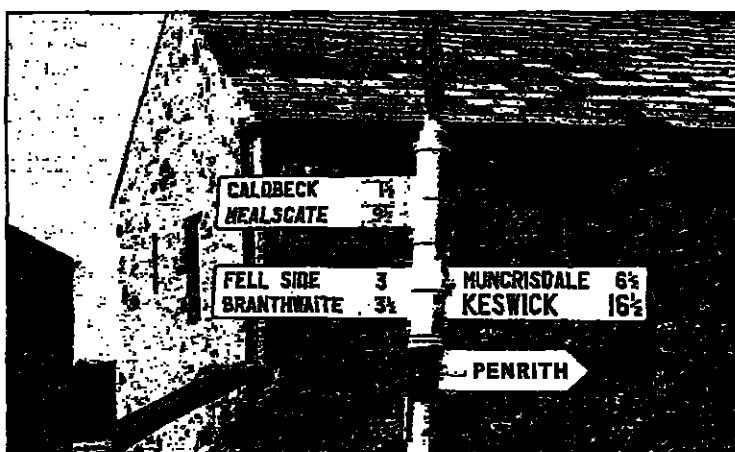
1951. The finest park-within-a-park is just above Ambleside; nip up the lane between Barclay's Bank and the Market Hall, and you will reach Stock Ghyll Park, where a dramatic half-hour hike reveals a first-rate waterfall on a hillside bedecked with daffils.

**The icing (or ice-pick?) on the cake**  
Residents of Kendal, the town apart from the Lake District proper, may by this stage be wondering impatiently just when their austere yet intricate abode will appear. The finest man-made attraction has been saved until last. Within the heavy stone of Abbot Hall, the Museum of Lakeland Life and Industry tells the human history of the region with a light touch.

Best of all is the Arthur Ransome room, where the tangled affairs of the master of Lakeland prose are unravelled. The desk of the man who wrote *Swallows and Amazons* looks as though he has just stepped away from it for a minute; indeed, I haven't seen anything quite like it since visiting Leon Trotsky's study at the revolutionary's former home in Mexico City. Curiously, Mr Ransome married Leon Trotsky's secretary.

Keswick caper: Casterigg stone circle is a mile or so out of town

Photographs: MSU/Simon Calder



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Call cost 50p per minute at all times. Winners selected at random after lines close 6 April 1998. Usual Independent Newspaper rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

## GREEN CHANNEL

The Himalayan Tourist Code has been devised by the charity Tourism Concern. Although it is specifically intended for visitors to the world's highest mountain range, some aspects of it can, of course, be applied to visits to the Lake District and other mountainous parts of the world:

- "Limit deforestation. Make no open fires and discourage others from doing so on your behalf. Where water is heated by scarce firewood, use as little as possible. Whenever it is possible, choose accommodation that uses kerosene or fuel-efficient wood stoves.

- "Remove litter. Bury paper and carry away with you all non-degradable litter. Graffiti are permanent examples of environmental pollution.
- "Keep local water clean. Avoid using pollutants such as detergents in streams or springs. If no toilet facilities are available, make sure you are at least 30 metres away from water sources and bury or cover wastes.
- "Plants - should be left to flourish in their natural environment. Taking cuttings, seeds and roots is illegal in many parts of the Himalayas.
- "Photographs - when taking photographs respect the privacy of others. Ask

- permission and use restraint.
- "Respect holy places. Preserve what you have come to see. Never touch or remove religious objects. Shoes should be removed when visiting temples.
- "Gifts. Giving to children encourages begging. A donation to a project, health centre or school is a more constructive way to help.
- "Follow local customs. You will be accepted and welcomed if you follow local customs. Use only your right hand for eating and greeting. Do not share cutlery or cups etc. It is polite to use both hands when giving or receiving gifts.
- "Respect for local

- etiquette earns you respect. Loose, lightweight clothes are preferable to revealing shorts, skimpy tops and tight-fitting action wear. Hand-holding and kissing in public are disliked by local people.
- "Observe standard food

- and bed charges, but do not condone overcharging. Remember when you are shopping that the bargains you buy may only be possible because of low income to others.
- "As a guest, respect local

- traditions, protect local cultures, maintain local pride. The Himalayas may change you; please do not change them."
- Tourism Concern (0171-733 3330)

## RED CHANNEL

### Trouble in Mexico

The latest Foreign Office travel advice for Mexico warns of "a high incidence of armed robbery", and says "resistance is often met with violence". It continues: "Particular care should be taken on public transport, and at airports, bus stations and popular tourist sites. Care should be taken on the Mexico City Metro, where there is a high incidence of pickpocketing.

"There is also a risk of robbery outside major cities, particularly in the states of Michoacan, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas and Campeche. Avoid travel after dark, and isolated beaches at all times. Travellers should not

give a telephone number for family or friends in the UK to strangers who claim to be carrying out surveys. Such information has been used to extort money."

Meanwhile, the US State Department this week issued a stern warning about taxis in Mexico City: "Absolutely avoid hailing Volkswagen bug taxis and other cabs on the street. Robberies of passengers in taxis are becoming more frequent and more violent.

"Tourists are not only robbed, but often beaten. US Embassy employees have been advised to use only taxis from authorized taxi stands, especially upon arrival at Mexico City Airport."

You can contact the Foreign Office Travel Advice Unit on 0171-238 4503 or 4504, or fax 0171-238 4545; or at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

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# Renaissance revisited at the touch of a button

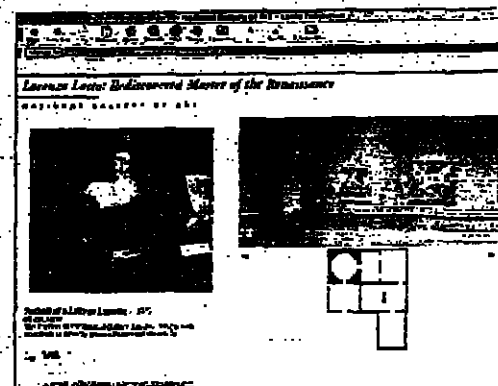
Before travelling thousands of miles to see the works of a favourite artist, check the Internet, advises Matthew Hoffman. Lorenzo Lotto may never have intended his paintings to appear on screen – but now the modern art lover is well prepared to see the real thing

Do you, like me, find yourself reading reviews of exhibitions in New York, Milan and Paris that will never come to London? Up to now, the only remedy open to those of us who could not find the time, or money, to travel to distant cities in pursuit of fleeting assemblies of works by a favourite painter or movement has been to buy the catalogue – if even that could be found, in English and affordable. The other day, however, I happened upon an imaginative development that offers some solace to the stay-at-home art lover: the virtual tour.

I had been planning a trip to Washington DC, to be taken some time this spring, for reasons unconnected with art: but having read of an exhibition of the Italian Renaissance paintings of Lorenzo Lotto that had opened at the National Gallery there, I thought I would try to catch the show as well. But when would it close? And just which works would they be exhibiting?

Lotto was a recently acquired interest of mine. In the autumn of 1996, in the Correr Museum in Venice, I had come upon a small picture by Lotto of the Virgin enthroned, a little crown held over her head by two hovering angels. And although there were many more famous paintings in the Correr, something about the little Lotto captivated me. So I kept an eye out after that for other works by him. One, in London's National Gallery, showed me that he could paint portraits with exquisite detail, and an altarpiece dedicated to Saint Antonine in the Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, of two monks handing out alms to and receiving petitions from a highly realistic multitude, confirmed that he could work on a large scale as well. Then, last year, a book came out – *Lorenzo Lotto*, by Peter Humfrey, about the artist's life and works that helped feed my curiosity – and whet my appetite to see more of the paintings themselves.

What to do, then, about Washington? I turned



'A Lady with a Drawing of Lucretia' by Lorenzo Lotto, left. Above, as it appears on the Internet site.  
Photograph: The Bridgeman Art Library

to the Internet. A little poking about found the US National Gallery website, and the information that the Lotto show was due to close on 1 March. Did I want to move my trip forward? Pondering that, I idly clicked on Lotto's name, and found myself being asked whether I wished to take a "virtual tour" of the Lotto exhibition. Of course, I did.

The tour included all the rooms and all the paintings, together with some additional material (such

as some rare oriental rugs similar to those that appear in Lotto's paintings), and plenty of information. There's even a facility to hear the same sound track that is played on the audio tour available at the exhibition itself. You need a somewhat later version of the Internet web browser than I happened to be using to get the full automated tour; but there is an alternative tour in which you click your way around the walls of the rooms to get what I take to

be the same maps, close-ups of the paintings and commentary. Intriguing and informative as the site is, though, like everything on the Internet the whole setup is a little slower, and little more clumsy, than it promises.

Is there any point in seeing the show itself after such a tour in the comfort of your home or office? Well, I did go – for the last day, Sunday, 1 March. And, of course, there is nothing like the real thing.

The scale, for one, is important; you get no idea just what size the pictures are from reproductions on paper or screen, even when the measurements are given. Then there is the paint quality: the real works don't glow from behind as they do on a video screen, nor do they have the concentrated intensity of reduced versions on coated paper. To be frank, they are a little dull in comparison; but immeasurably more affecting, for all that.

My virtual tour did yield one unexpected benefit. As I approached the National Gallery, great billboard signs outside proclaimed "LOTTO", a bit as they do in New York City, where you are being bidden to play the local lottery. Inside, the hype continued: the show was subtitled "Rediscovered Master of the Renaissance" and you were told immediately and repeatedly that this great painter had been obscured by the popular acclaim accorded to Titian. In fact, Lotto is a very touching minor painter, at least by comparison with Titian, and his work is noted in every decent guide to the art of Venice.

Judging by a couple of conversations I had in Washington with others who had seen the Lotto show, they had been disappointed. But as anyone who had previously taken the Internet tour knew what to expect, presumably, like me, they were neither surprised nor disappointed to have failed to encounter the grandeur, sensuousness and cultural sophistication of another Titian. Lotto's works provide different satisfactions, not the less welcome for being in a lower register. The hype may mislead, but the virtual tour gives a truer impression of what's to be found on the walls of the gallery.

The Lotto virtual tour continues at [www.nga.gov/exhibitions/lotto.htm](http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/lotto.htm). The real thing can be seen at the Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti, Bergamo, 2 April-28 June; and the Grand Palais, Paris, 12 October-11 January 1999.

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# Downhill Downunder

If you haven't quenched your thirst for snow as the season thaws on this side of the globe, writes Stephen Wood, New Zealanders are already on the piste

Buses lack some of the romance of other forms of travel. Train journeys, yes, cruises, yes, even canal boat trips and cycling holidays; but when was the last time you heard of somebody spending their holiday on a bus tour? Nevertheless, BBC-TV will eventually get round to a series of *Great Bus Journeys of the World*. And when it does so, I hope Michael Palin won't ignore the ride to The Remarkables, even though it takes only about half-an-hour and covers a distance – as the crow flies – of just a dozen kilometres.

The route out of Queenstown, on New Zealand's South Island, doesn't seem remarkable at first: it just follows the same road towards the airport – as Queenstown's other ski-shuttle, to the Coronet Peak resort. That bus – I had caught it the previous day – was completely packed; this one, heading for the slopes of The Remarkables, had only four passengers in the 60-odd seats. But where that bus had turned north out of the valley, this one turned south. And where that bus had rolled along metalled roads, this one turned across a cattle grid and headed up a mountain track.

Queenstown's ski shuttles are not buses of the air-conditioning, WC, ABS, video era; they have gears that crunch, engines that roar – and probably a history that would earn them a place in a transport museum in more sentimental countries. Yet this one set off up the mountainside bucking and kicking, through a howling blizzard and on a gravel-and-snow surface that would have had an Alpine goat stopping to check its hooves.

Inside the bus, team spirit began to grow as our journey became more perilous. When the driver stopped, put on thick leather gloves and announced that he was going outside and that he might be some time, because he had to fit snow chains to the rear wheels, one passenger even offered to go out into the blizzard to help him; and, later, when the rear wheels began to spin again, all four of us leapt at the driver's suggestion to go to the back of the bus and put our combined weight, meagre though it was, where it might do some good, over the back axle.

Getting a grip seemed a good idea. As the rough track climbed 1,300 metres up the mountain, the

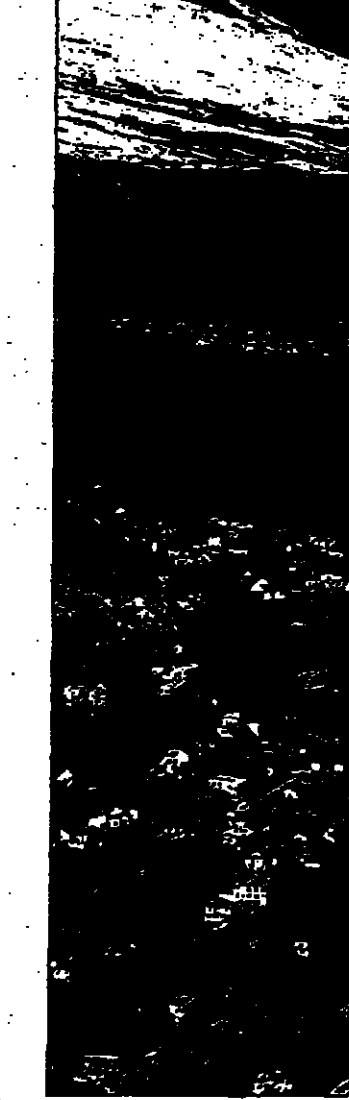
clouds occasionally cleared to reveal the view. We saw the sheer drop, all the way down to the Kararua river, but we couldn't see the guard rails, because there weren't any. We saw a man sitting in his van, against which he had propped billboards offering snow-chains for hire at \$26 a time to ill-prepared motorists. We saw the road signs saying "Avalanche area: no stopping". Finally we saw the base of the ski resort, and safety.

Conceptually, skiing is tricky in New Zealand. It's a late-summer sport, for a start; the season usually gets going in June and runs through to October. For any habitude of the Alps, the concept that it is the north-facing slopes that get the sun (as they do south of the Equator) is bound to be elusive. You have to forget about "ski resorts", too: Coronet Peak and The Remarkables – in common with the country's other ski areas – may be busy at 4pm, but an hour later they're as deserted as a Sixties housing estate in mid-winter, because all the accommodation is a bus ride away. And pleasant though it is, you would never mistake Queenstown for St Moritz, despite the lakeside setting.

In practical terms, however, the skiing is easy at Queenstown. This is not only New Zealand's major winter sports area, it is also a centre for adrenaline activities – from bungy jumping (whose origins lie nearby) through jet-boating and rafting to bus-riding. But you couldn't really include skiing among its thrill sports – at least, not in poor snow. In Coronet Peak, the main face of the mountain and its three chair-lifts were all open when I was there; but the skiing was steady and consistent rather than stirring, with fast blues and bumpy blacks running down from 1,650 metres. The back bowls, apparently much more challenging, were closed.

Still, the resort facilities were excellent, and the staff were extremely friendly – although the standard refrain of the ski-lift girls, "Had a good day so far?", did, with those last two words, suggest that some disaster might be just around the corner.

Best of all, though, was the view. Queenstown has a population of only 2,500, but it has beds for 15,000 people – and from Coronet Peak you can see why. Set on the edge of Lake Wakatipu, 310 metres above sea level



Queenstown is surrounded by mountains, many of them (unlike the soft-contoured Coronet Peak) rugged, dramatic and 2,000 metres high. Most impressive are The Remarkables, a long ridge that runs south from the ski area (at 1,957 metres) towards the peak of Ben Nevis (which, at 2,240 metres, is about a kilometre higher than the one in Scotland).

It wasn't just the proximity of Ben Nevis – or the blizzard, the arduous journey up the mountain, or the lack of crowds – that made me think of Scotland. The skiing at the more popular Coronet Peak reflects its soft terrain; at The Remarkables both the skiing and the terrain are more rugged. Although here, once again,

the lack of snow meant that half the resort was closed, the absence of grooming made even the resort's long blue runs a challenge, as well as the short and steep black chutes into its Sugar Bowl.

But it wasn't like skiing in Scotland: there were more Japanese skiers, for a start – and there were parrots on the terrace of the resort restaurant. The kea mountain parrot is a hooligan, more colourful in character than in most of its plumage; one of its favourite tricks is to tear out the rubber surround of a car windscreen with its beak. New Zealanders usually give these birds a wide berth. I watched as a couple of the parrots flew in off the mountain, spread their wings to reveal

lurid red feathers underneath, and then settled down to eat the food that the Japanese skiers had hurriedly abandoned. A remarkable sight, and itself worth the bus journey up the mountain.

There are plenty of cheap flights to New Zealand between April and June; the best deals are on carriers such as Singapore and Japan Airlines, for around £550 return. Five-night, all-inclusive ski packages from Christchurch to Coronet Peak and The Remarkables are offered by the Mount Cook group (0181-741 5652) for £359 (based on two sharing, includes lift pass). At the resorts, equipment packages cost from NZ\$30 per day, lift passes \$59 (Coronet Peak) or \$57 (The Remarkables).

**Resort with a view: Queenstown and the Remarkables on New Zealand's South Island**  
Photograph: Nick Servant/Robert Harding

## Crawling, walking; now get them skiing

Claire Gilman on how to ensure your kids love the slopes from the word go

Skiing as a family can be one of the most rewarding of experiences, and your child's first venture on to the slopes should be an exhilarating time for you all. Most ski professionals agree that four or five is the optimum age to start skiing. But kids are like the proverbial elephant, and if it all goes miserably wrong on that first attempt, they will never forget; no amount of bribery will get them back on skis. So it is important that you do all you can to ensure whinge-free skiing pleasure from the start.

Weather conditions can be a major cause of discontent; children get bitterly cold standing around on the nursery slopes, particularly in January and February. Once they have suffered frozen fingers, the whole skiing experience will be tarnished. Therefore, it is best for young families to go late-season skiing, when the weather is warm and the sun is likely to shine. Aim to go before Christmas, in April, or even in May.

Extended skiing seasons depend on the height of the resort and the availability of glacier skiing or artificial snow. The French Alps offer a good choice of big, high-ski areas with efficient lift networks. Resorts such as Val d'Isère, which links with the glacier skiing at Tignes, or Val Thorens, the highest ski resort in Europe (part of the enormous skiing region of Les Trois Vallées) run seasons from early November to May.

Austria has some of the best glacier resorts in the Alps and is renowned for its warm welcome, lively night-life and good-value accommodation. Both France and Austria have a good reputation for children's ski schools, although you must satisfy yourselves that the instructors are speaking English in the classes. If your child doesn't understand what is being said, they cannot be expected to progress or to be happy.

For those with a tough constitution, who can stomach the idea of an eight-hour flight with the kids, North America is a good option for late-season skiing and there are some good deals to be had at the moment. The US, in particular, has good, reliable ski conditions late into the season in most areas, thanks to low winter temperatures, extensive snow-making and religious piste-grooming. Another advantage is that there are no language problems for children in the ski schools.

Although late-season skiing means that you miss the worst of the winter weather, good quality, warm clothing is still essential for children. But it must be manageable for the child when you're not around; if they can't do up their own salopettes, it doesn't much matter which month of the year you ski: it will be an unmitigated disaster.

Ski hire equipment in most resorts is good now, but if your child complains of uncomfortable boots, etc, don't be afraid to return as many times as it takes to get a good fit. Take your time; be patient but persistent. Uncomfortable boots will put your children off skiing more quickly than anything else.

Despite your best efforts, and against all probability, you have to face the fact that your child may loathe skiing. So, make sure that you are booked with a reliable tour operator who specialises in family skiing holidays. Finally, don't start the child skiing too young. The best time is governed not so much by age as by ability. They must be able to put on their own gloves, and be reasonably self-reliant. If not, they will get cold and miserable and be put off for life.

## The Icarus syndrome, or how to join the bird club

Run for your life, then jump off a mountain. Yes, says Eric Kendall, hang-gliding is the sport of lunatics

There's nothing quite like learning with the best. When it comes to the "extreme" sport of hang-gliding, knowing that your virgin flight is piloted by a national champion gives immeasurable confidence. Then, just after take-off – when that moment of true terror subsides – it dawns on you that you're with the man who goes highest, farthest and fastest, and possibly takes more risks than other pilots...



But don't worry about that for now. Just getting airborne is hard enough, psychologically, on a tandem flight. It's not even a cliff, strictly speaking, that you have to jump off, but by the time you reach the end of the crazy steep wooden launch ramp that hangs from the mountainside, there's nothing below you to snag your wings or break your fall. For anyone with a normal response to precipitous places, running hard to the

ground, with the comfort of someone by you to sort out mistakes. It's the sensation of free flight – the undiluted thrill of soaring high in the air with nothing between you and the earth. And you can do it without even having to know the meaning of stall, spin or "incident" – the official hang-gliding term for anything from a stubbed toe to much, much worse.

In the air, you're just ballast, but probably quite noisy as dead weights go.

particular when swooping downwards – something the pilot does from time to time to check that you're paying attention. Looking down isn't a problem – it's all such a long way off – but looking round and above at the fluttering edge of the wing can trigger an emotional crisis. Every reminder of the insubstantial craft that is keeping you up there, tests your faith.

The astonishing views change with alarming speed. In the foreground are your hands resting on the base bar, while the valley floor forms a far-off backdrop, but in the middle distance, and coming rapidly closer, is the side of the mountain. Suddenly treetops and rock are blurring past, but a sweeping turn takes you back out over the valley. All sensation of speed is lost, other than the wind on your face. Flying over a nonchalant bird of prey, you have to wonder what it's thinking. You're bright yellow, and much bigger than any of its relations, but like them you're flying quietly, which seems to be the critical factor; you're one of the team.

Control of the hang-glider is achieved by moving your body weight. Pulling yourself towards the triangular control frame points the nose downwards, increasing speed; pulling yourself to one side makes the hang-glider turn in that direction. Pushing back too much slows you down and eventually results in a stall – something you want to do only when landing.

And that's probably the worst part of a tandem flight. Landing on two pairs of feet would require the co-ordination of three-legged-race world champions, so you land (nominally) on the wheels at the ends of the base bar, and flat on your stomach. At best, your nose comes within inches of ploughing through a cowpat.

Welcome to the glamorous world of hang-gliding.

**Where to learn**  
The British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (0116 261 1322) has details of local clubs and licensed flying schools. *Training Wings*, the official training magazine, contains practical information and encouraging features.

Tandem flights aren't universally available, but are becoming more popular for teaching as well as "joy rides". Standard tuition in the UK involves a three-to-four-day elementary course, with controlled low-level solo flying. The next stage, Club Pilot, involves higher launches and learning to soar – rising on thermals and "wave" (wind forced upwards over hills and mountains). Astonishing height gains can be achieved in the right weather.

As for learning abroad, some of the most spectacular hang-gliding takes place in the Alps and joy-rides are often available above ski areas. If you want to learn to fly in a more challenging region, Österreichische Zivilluftfahrtschule, Kossen, Austria (fax: 0043 5375 2160), is based in one of the best areas for the sport. Spain is also popular, thanks to mountainous terrain and warm weather.

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# When Welkin went on holiday

There were strange happenings down in the farmyard, as Duff Hart-Davis observed, when a visiting donkey met a trio of camelids

Welkin has a large and (for a donkey) very handsome head, but I fear that not much of it is occupied by brains. His behaviour may be marginally less idiotic than it was when we first knew him five years ago, but he still has a phenomenal capacity for making an ass of himself.

We bought him from a shady dealer near Swindon when he was two years old, and found that he was exceedingly nervous, as if he had been knocked about. We did what we could to build up his confidence, and then sold him to a friend who wanted a companion for her own jenny, Hannah. She – the new owner – lavished such affection on Welkin that he became much calmer.

Now the pair of donkeys visit us for regular holidays, often staying for

inhabited by furry monsters, he went ballistic.

If you are a donkey, and feel the need to demonstrate outrage, you have to make certain preparations. One is to stick your tail straight out behind you in a horizontal bar; another is to flick your ears back and forward like range-finders; another is to raise your nose high in the air, roll back your upper lip and start braying as though the world is about to end.

Welkin went through this routine in a couple of seconds. As he wound himself up, I could see him thinking, "What in the name of creation are these?" Then, suitably adjusted, and roaring like a demon, he launched a charge at the intruders.

Never mind that, with his head

pulled up with flanks heaving and a bemused expression on his face, while the alpacas took stock of the situation from the safety of an overgrown hedge.

Thereafter his charges became increasingly half-hearted; everybody gradually settled down, and now the two species take each other for granted.

After four months in residence, the alpacas themselves have adapted well to life in the Cotswolds. They have overcome their phobia about chickens, which they thought exceedingly dangerous when they arrived, and they have grown tremendous fleeces, so long that their wool undulates in the wind.

Abbednego – he of the black cap and white-tipped ears – is the tamest, and will take food from your hand; but all three remain cautious about approaching human beings, and stick close together, especially if worried. When the hunt came past the other day, and hounds gave tongue in the wood on the escarpment, the three alpacas formed up in characteristic defensive formation, facing outwards in a little star, backsides together.

The man who sold them to us claimed that they make good anti-fox guards. At the time I thought he was pulling a fast one – but now I believe he was right. One afternoon towards dusk my wife saw the alpacas deliberately harassing a fox which had emerged from the wood on its evening round: they chased it down the field to the point where the footpath goes over a stile – and it was just the fox's bad luck that it then met a man walking his dog in the opposite direction.

Certainly we have lost no chickens to foxes since the alpacas joined up – and now their vigilance has become all the more important, as we have just taken delivery of a Brahma cockerel and three hens. These birds, being heavily built and rather statuesque, would be sitting targets for Reynard if some other species were not keeping a lookout on their behalf. Welkin, we know, doesn't give a damn for foxes – so it is up to our biblical trio to act as early-warning radar.

**As Welkin wound himself up, I could see him thinking 'What in the name of creation are these?' Then, suitably adjusted and roaring like a demon, he launched a charge at the intruders**

several weeks – and this time, when they arrived in February, it was touching to see how pleased they were to find themselves back in familiar surroundings, with a couple of horses for company and carrots for tea. Hannah is always welcome because, although lacking Welkin's looks, she has such an engaging personality.

Apart from anything else she makes an excellent alarm-clock, since she blasts the farmyard with an ear-splitting roar at precisely 6.55 every morning. Her one serious drawback is that she is the Houdini of the donkey world, able to unlock the latch or bolt on almost any stable door.

What Welkin did not immediately realise was that since his last sojourn his territory had been invaded by strangers, in the form of our alpacas Shadrach, Meshak and Abbednego. When he did find out that the field was

tilted back at a crazy angle, he could hardly see where he was going; in a few strides he was travelling at maximum velocity. For a moment the alpacas watched him superciliously. Then the sight and sound of the supersonic donkey became too much, and they also took off.

Camelids are extremely agile. Sideways jumps are part of their daily repertoire, and they can turn on a fivepenny piece. When Welkin bore down on them, all three took a sudden jink to their right, which left him motoring hard into the distance, pulling two or three g in a right-handed turn. Having at last scorched to a halt, he adjusted his sights and put in another rush, still bellowing, only to hit empty space once again.

Half a dozen repetitions brought him, if not to his senses, at least to a state of temporary exhaustion. He



Donkey daze: Welkin on vacation

Photograph: John Lawrence

## What, when, where ...

Check the state of the surf before you head for the mile-long beach at Praa Sands, between Penzance and Helston, this weekend, to watch round one of the Solal Wave Rebel bodyboarding grand prix. This is the start of the Cornish world water sports festival, running from March to October, which includes pilot gig racing, surf life-saving and the Cutty Sark tall ships race. One of the festival sponsors is the St Austell brewery, so you can enjoy a glass of Tinnors or Wreckers while you admire the rippling muscles.

Festival hot line: 0891 22 1998, Solal Wave: 01637 871153, Surfcat: 0839380 360

Sally Kindberg



## A date with a hedge

A bit of hawthorn, a dash of ash: what does it mean? Matthew Brace plays rural detective in Oxfordshire as he digs up the history of a local hedgerow

It looked like any ordinary hedge, but Peigi Wallace knew it was something special. She stared at it for some time before sticking her head between two bushes for a closer examination.

"Aha, it's a double hedge, very interesting," came her muffled voice from the undergrowth.

Reluctantly I joined her, thrusting my head past the thorns and brambles. The winter had eaten away a lot of foliage and left two distinct, parallel lines of tangled, brown sticks about 4ft apart, leading north.

"This gives us a vital clue," Dr Wallace said, with a sparkle in her eye. I was still none the wiser.

We were hedge-dating, playing rural detectives to trace the history of this south-western corner of Oxfordshire. This spring you are likely to see a lot more people with their heads stuck in hedges looking for clues.

Since the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) launched a campaign last year to save hedgerows, in response to widespread destruction, hundreds of volunteers have been out, scrambling along field boundaries investigating hedges in order to build up a historical map of the English countryside. Over the winter, trees and bushes are harder to identify because of the lack of leaves and flowers, but with spring upon us local CPRE groups are expecting lots more volunteers.

Hedgerows have become a highly contentious issue in recent years. According to the CPRE, they are being deliberately removed to the order of 3,600km (more than 2,200 miles) every year, and even more are being damaged by neglect. About a third of the hedges in England and Wales are estimated to have been removed in the decade between 1984 and 1994.

Hedgerows are important for a number of reasons. Aesthetically, they are picturesque and historic characteristics of the English countryside which add to our enjoyment of views. Practically, they mark the boundaries between parishes and estates. And

ecologically, they are havens for wildlife. Hedgerows provide wildlife corridors along which small mammals can forage, protected from aerial predators by thick brambles and branches. Small birds use the same protection of the hedgerows to build their nests. Take away the hedge, and the diversity of species is bound to suffer.

Under the Hedgerow Regulations brought in last summer, anyone who wants to remove a hedge must get permission from the local planning authority, and hedgerows deemed "important" will be protected. Anyone flouting the law could be fined £5,000. The CPRE was critical of the laws, fearing they would save fewer than one in five hedgerows, but was relieved at the Government's proposed increase in protection.

Their cause is helped considerably by the information collected by hedgerow-daters, which is passed to local authorities to ensure that as many hedgerows as possible are saved. Thanks to Dr Wallace, hedgerow co-ordinator of the CPRE's Oxfordshire branch, the county is ahead of the game, with roughly a quarter of its hedges already surveyed.

"I think the tide has turned here. We are certainly not losing any more hedgerows here in Oxfordshire, but we are only getting a very few new ones built," she said. "That's why we have to keep dating. If we lost our hedgerows, it would not be the English countryside any more."

She had picked for me a hedge near the small town of Grove in the Vale of the White Horse, unknown even to her, so I would have to start from scratch. "Have you ever dated a hedge before?" Dr Wallace asked. I had heard of Hooper's rule. Max Hooper, who worked with the Nature Conservancy in the Sixties, discovered that you could estimate a hedge's age by counting the number of species in a 30-metre stretch: one species, he reckoned, equals 100 years. "That's not

enough. That's just a starting-point. There are days of research after you have done that," said Dr Wallace.

My hedge contained hawthorn, elder, sycamore, ash and hazel, and it had clearly been planted as a double hedge. Hooper might have left it at that, estimating it to be a hedge from the 15th century, and moved on to the next one, but I had been bitten by the hedge-dating bug and wanted to know more. I was tempted to drop in at the National Monuments Record in Swindon, to view their unique collection of aerial reconnaissance photographs taken by the RAF and the US Air Force during the war. They show every field, road, barn and, crucially, every hedge. If I'd had the time and money I could also have taken a trip to Maryland in the US, to view sets of photographs taken by the German Luftwaffe which were claimed by American troops at the fall of Berlin.

But these records would take me back only 50 years. I needed to go back much further into the past, so instead I paid a visit to the Royal Geographical Society's map room in west London and got my hands on an original 1875 chart of the area.

There, along the route Dr Wallace and I had walked, was marked a Green Lane, an abandoned track just wide enough for a horse and cart. It even had a name, Windsor Lane. I had at least partly solved our mystery.

Of course, the dedicated hedge dater could add to this, consulting tithe and enclosure maps and early Ordnance Surveys to find out where the lane led, when it was planted and who might have used it. The lane's straightness could suggest Roman influence, and it is close enough to the Marlborough Downs to have been, possibly, a more recent branch of the Ridgeway.

One thing was for sure. Peigi and I had discovered that it was important enough to have been named and given status on a map. That, the CPRE would argue, is ample evidence that this hedge is also important enough to save today.

## NATURE NOTE

Every night now, the elver-fishers are out on the banks of the Severn, dipping their nets in the hope that they will come up filled with gold. It seems barely credible that the baby eels – tiny, translucent and only a couple of inches long – have drifted all the way from the Sargasso Sea, off the Gulf of Mexico. Still more extraordinary is the fact that such primitive creatures have some power of navigation.

Even the most experienced fishermen do not really understand the movements of the elvers once they enter the river. They drift upstream on big tides, and then, as the ebb sets in, they seem to make for the banks, heading for flows of fresh water. On some nights they mass into solid snakes, miles long, and if a fisherman hits one of those, his fortune is made: he has only to put his net in the water to load it.

In the old days – until the Stakes – elvers were a spring treat for country people. For a few weeks, in every cottage, they became staple fare, and boys sold any surplus for shillings a pound. Now, such is the demand from Europe and Japan that the price has rocketed to £10 a kilo – four times that of smoked salmon – and locals can no longer afford the delicacy.

Duff Hart-Davis

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Dr Wallace









# Full of the joys of early spring

Hyacinths, primroses, tulips... the garden is awash with great splurges of flowers, and now's the time to plan ahead for more. **Anna Pavord** gets trowelling

I do not see why we should not enjoy a mild winter and an early spring from time to time without supposing that the end of the world is nigh. It may yet all end in tears, with a hideous April, but March has been good in our garden. Bulbs have been flowering with reckless abandon - deep magenta *Tulipa pulchella*, almost smothered by spotty lungwort, and bright yellow *T. greigiiensis*, with the backs of their petals washed over with a complicated bronzy green. There are hyacinths everywhere.

Each year, when the bowls of forced hyacinths have finished in the house, I plant them out, more because it seems murderous to throw living things away than because I expect much from them. But this spring there have been 40 or 50 in bloom in the garden, growing even better than they do in bowls. In the house, I grow the bulbs in compost rather than fibre, and fancy (though I have no proof) that the sustenance they get from the compost makes it easier for them to pick up their socks in subsequent seasons. They have to expend a lot of their own capital if they are grown in fibre.

One group of blue and white hyacinths is clustered round a variegated bromelia (creamy leaves, forget-me-not flowers), the whole ensemble looking ridiculously like a piece of willow pattern china. Dark blue hyacinths grow amongst the low, pale, ferny foliage of sweet cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*) with clumps of a white Barnhaven primula, one of the few varieties that I got round to splitting last year. In another group, the colours are reversed, with white hyacinths, a stray bit of *Euphorbia robiae* which absent-mindedly wandered off from the place in which it was put, and dark, almost navy blue cowichan primulas, also grown from Barnhaven seed.

I could get very interested in primroses, but I'm trying not to. Since I am already besotted with tulips and have more than a passing interest in aquilegias, our garden is in danger of screeching to a sudden, awful halt at the end of June. If I'm to fall in love, it must be with something that peaks in August or September. Sunflowers? Fun, but not complicated enough. Salvias? Too complicated by half. Penstemons? Yawn, yawn. Well, there are always pears. Pears are riveting.

Over the years, the primroses cross with each other, and drift into muddy mauves, but originally I had a mixture called 'Butterscotch' – copper, bronze, apricot and yellow – another mixture called 'Valentine Victorians' – rich, crimson pinks – and one called 'Rustic Reds' in the colours of tawny wallflowers.

Now is the time to be sowing more to flower next spring. They like cool conditions, so the seed is best sown thinly on the surface of compost in a 5-in pot, covered with a pane of glass and then left outside in a north-facing position. Primula seed dawdles towards germination, so it may be six weeks before you know whether you are to be a proud parent.

When happy, the primulas seed round with abandon. Out on what we unimaginatively call The Bank, a semicircular sweep of sloping ground around the south and west of the

house. Barnheven 'Muted Victorians' and 'Striped Victorians' are flowering fine to bust, in weird shades of dirty pink and blue. The paths up the bank are dressed each year with crushed bark. This is evidently an ideal medium for self-seeding as there are far more seedlings here, where there is no competition, than ever appear on the bank itself. It slightly defeats the purpose of the path, of course, to have it covered with plants, but I dig up seedlings in trowelfuls – polyanthus, double daisies, verbascons, foxgloves, verbena, lychnis, polemonium – and press them on anyone who calls. The milkman scarcely dares come any more, but it keeps the path more or less open to traffic.

"Cantata", my tulips of the year two seasons ago, were planted out when they had finished their spectacular display, close to a young plant of *Euphorbia characias wulfenii*. The euphorbia has now reached its zenith, but unfortunately the tulips have dwindled. I like the brilliant red of the tulip with the acid green of the spurge. The equally bright *T. ichleri* has more staying power and has good foliage of a very pale, glaucous grey. Next autumn, I'm going to plant masses more of them close to the spurges.

The big spurges, such as *Euphorbia characias*, usually peak in late spring but have brought forward their act this year and are flowering with the purple-pink magnolia 'Leonard Messel'. They have blue brunnera as a companion. The spurges self-seed, too, and there is an extraordinary measure of variation in the seedlings' foliage and flowers. The ones I like most have bluish leaves and very bright lime flowers, without the dark eye.

Unfortunately, they have been moved and they suck for ages if you try. I find it best to cut down most of the tall stems and wait for new growth to sprout from the bottom. But generally, this is a good time to shift herbaceous perennials, before there is too much top growth to get damaged in the move. The difficulty lies in remembering what you said last summer you were going to do this spring. I was going to shift some day-lilies, but have forgotten where I thought they ought to go. Resolution: make better notes.

The most evil sight in the garden is the narcissus 'Teraz', with yellow petals and harsh orange trumpets, underneath the last pink blossoms of the viburnum 'Dawn'. For a long time, when the children wanted flowers to take to school in spring, Teraz' was the sacrificial victim, which solved two problems at once. Having survived these onslaughts, the flowers now cheer horribly every time I look out of the bedroom window. Perhaps the milkman may be the answer here, too.

*Old-fashioned Barnhaven primroses are available from Sonia Wright Plants, Westfield Farmhouse, West Street, Aldbourne, Wiltshire SN8 2BS (01672 540995). The nursery is open from 10am to dusk, Monday to Saturday, all year round.*



**Spring rush:** when bowls of forced hyacinths such as 'Pink Ear' have finished flowering, plant the bulbs outdoors.

Photograph: John Glover/GPI

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Tropical triumphs: Martin Gibbons and palms

Photograph: Rui Xavier

## A little bit of Africa in Richmond

There is no need to be a gardening expert to cultivate something exotic on the lawn. Anyone can plant a palm tree, and contrary to popular belief there are many kinds of palms that thrive in a British climate.

In Victorian times London boasted several nurseries specialising in tropical plants, and recently palms in particular have enjoyed a resurgence. Not far from the hothouses of Kew Gardens is Britain's only palm specialist centre, set in what were once the spacious vegetable gardens of Ham House on the banks of the Thames. It resembles - well - a little oasis.

Run by Martin Gibbons, a veritable encyclopaedia on palms, the centre has dozens of hardy palm trees for sale, as well as tropical and subtropical hothouse plants. You can browse through this forest of vegetation at your leisure and spend anything from £2.50 for a

The stuff of ... greenery. Sally Staples goes for palms

seedling to £1,700 for a 40-year-old, 20-ft-high Argentinian palm.

Martin, who trained as a furniture designer, became interested in palms when his brother gave him one as a present and he watered it to death. He began to travel in the East and, armed with volumes of information, opened his first shop in 1989 in Sheen, Surrey, on his return to England.

Demand for his exotic trees soon grew, and Martin soon had to seek more space. Many specialists buy from him, and he exports to Ireland, France and even Spain, where the same palms are more expensive. "Some people walk in for 10 minutes to browse, and spend £5,000. Others will be here for much longer, and walk away absolutely thrilled with a £5 seedling," he says.

Mediterranean fan palms are popular, ranging from seedlings to trees 10ft tall. A 20-ft Sabal palmetto palm, the state tree of Florida, has a £995 price tag; there are yuccas and tree ferns from as little as £20.

Martin has an avenue of Chusan palms from China - a breed brought over to England in 1840 which were among the first specimens to be kept in the palm house at Kew. They have large, fan-shaped leaves sprouting from a spectacular hairy trunk, and will grow as much as 12in a year if provided with plenty of food and water.

"They are very hardy and can take frost and temperatures of -15°C in their stride," he says. "But wind is their major enemy. People associate palm trees with deserts and relentless sun,

or steamy tropical weather, but many grow in China and the Andes where the weather is far from tropical."

Inside the huge hothouse there is a great variety, including the bird of paradise palm from South Africa, the pygmy date palm, Japanese and Korean palms, and plants from Cuba and east Asia.

In 1991 Martin set up the European Palm Society, which now has nearly 1,000 members, and became director of the International Palm Society. His book, *The Palm Identifier* (Apple Press, £5.99 + £1.20 p&p), has sold more than 60,000 copies.

*The Palm Centre, Ham Central Nursery, Ham Street, Ham, Richmond, Surrey TW10 7EA (0181-255-6191). Open daily, 10am-6pm. A mail-order catalogue is available, price £1.95.*

## Sugar sauce from the trees of Canada

A taste of... sweetness. Nikki Spencer enjoys a spoonful of maple syrup

Spring is in the air, and the sap is rising in the deciduous forests of Canada, which account for 80 per cent of the world's production of maple syrup. Over the next few weeks local families and a growing number of tourists will head off into the "bush" to sample this year's harvest of maple syrup at sugar shacks dotted throughout the Maple Belt, the hardwood forest that stretches from the midwestern US through Ontario, Quebec and New England and into the Canadian Maritimes.

Seated at long trestle tables, visitors can feast on smoked bacon, sausages and crêpes, all laced with the newly produced maple syrup. Afterwards it is traditional to head outside and toss a batch of thick, boiled syrup into the snow, where it provides instant toffee for the children.

The sweet sap of the sugar maple was known and valued by the native people of North America long before European settlers arrived. An Iroquois legend tells of the use of "sweet water" to cook venison.

The sap is collected by simply boring holes in the trees. As pressure increases with changes in temperature, the sap rises and is collected in a cup attached to the trunk. This method, though, is being replaced in some areas by a vacuum tubing system.

The process is said not to harm the trees. The holes soon heal over, and producers claim that you can tap a tree every year for 100 years without harming it. A good tree produces 12-16 gallons of sap over the tapping period, which

sounds a lot - but it takes a good 35 gallons to make just one gallon of syrup. In the sugar house the sap is boiled down in open vats, and it is then filtered and bottled for distribution - mainly to America, but increasingly world-wide.

This winter's ice storms have caused concern to the sugar producers. Some maple trees have had branches broken off; others have split. The full extent of the damage won't be known until the harvest is over.

For a taste of maple syrup One of the most famous sugar shacks is the Sucrerie de la Montagne, 300 Rang St-George, Rigaud, Quebec JOP IPO (001 514 451 5204), open all year round. For details of other shacks (which tend to open for about six weeks in March and April) contact Destination Quebec (0990 561 705).

Maple syrup can be bought in most supermarkets. There are three grades: dark, medium and light. The lighter-coloured syrup has the most delicate flavour and is best for waffles, pancakes and ice-cream. Dark maple syrup is used for cooking.

For a taste of home-cooked Canada, the Maple Leaf, 41 Maiden Lane, London WC2 (0171-240 2843) is a favourite with expats. As well as traditional pancakes with maple syrup, on "wing night" - Monday - they serve fried chicken wings in three flavours: mild, hot, and suicide. Ice hockey videos are flown in regularly from Canada.

## GAMES

Last week's piece about goats, cars and the laws of probability has attracted a considerable postbag. The paradox began by putting you in the position of a game show contestant who has to pick one of three doors. All you know is that one of the doors has this week's star prize of a car behind it; the other two offer only a mungy goat. When you have picked one door, the host (who knows which door conceals the star prize) opens one of the doors you did not choose and shows a goat behind it. He then offers to let you change your mind. Most people then stick to their original choice. In fact, as explained last week, you will double your winning chance if you change your mind.

Antonio Carvalho writes from Henley on Thames: "Let's freeze the game show at the point when the host asks the contestant if he would like to change his mind. To avoid clutter, let's remove the door already shown to have a goat behind it. As far as the contestant is concerned, the circumstances remain

unchanged, ie the door initially chosen by him has only one-third of a chance of having the star prize behind it. Now let's bring in a passer-by from the street, show him the remaining two doors, and give him a go at the star prize. The odds for the passer-by cannot but be 50:50. But this is impossible, because the odds must be the same for the passer-by and the initial contestant. Unless probability is a subjective concept, in which case a whole chapter of maths goes down the plughole. Can you help? (I'd like to get some sleep!)"

That, I think, sums up the psychological aspect of the paradox rather better than I did last week. Ian Bellamy identifies the paradox as one cited by Frederick Mosteller of Harvard 30 years ago. Mosteller's explanation, he says, is to draw up a table of probabilities of the various possible outcomes when the contestant picks door A from three doors A, B and C. Four things can then happen:

- 1: A and B are goats; host opens B;
- 2: A and C are goats; host opens C;
- 3: B and C are goats; host opens B;
- 4: B and C are goats; host opens C.

Since the probability that the prize is behind any particular door is one in three, the probability of 1 and 2 are each one in three, while 3 and 4 each have only one in six chances of happening. If the contestant sticks to his original choice, he wins in cases 3 and 4, but loses in 1 and 2. The total probability of a win is therefore  $\frac{1}{6} + \frac{1}{6} = \frac{1}{3}$ . If he changes his mind, he wins in cases 1 and 2, and loses in 3 and 4; overall chance of a win  $\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{3} = \frac{2}{3}$ . Mr Bellamy concludes: "The Paradox, Mosteller sternly insists, is apparent only to those who fail to employ the proper sample space, which has to include the actions of the game show host."

But I am sure that will not totally cure Mr Carvalho's sleeplessness. For the real paradox lies not in the calculation of the probabilities, but in the nagging feeling

that the host's action in opening one door after you have made your choice is completely irrelevant.

Jim Bragg, however, has given us a very simple example that should cure any lingering example:

"I had difficulty intuitively (not logically) understanding why you should always opt to change your door, until someone explained it to me thus: The game show host offers a million doors to you. After you choose one, the host closes all doors except yours and one other. The odds on the other door having the star prize now seem a lot better, don't they?"

And that explains everything. A chap coming in from outside would still see only two apparently equal doors. You, however, would know that one door (your original choice) was picked at random from a million, the other was selected from 999,999 as the only one that might have a goat behind it. That's a very special door. Change your mind!

## PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Alain de Cadenet, 51, racing driver and television presenter

Of indoor-type things, my favourite game is pinball. It develops wonderful eye-to-hand co-ordination, and if you do a good job you get a replay.

I always think that pinball is an analogy of life in many ways, because you can stand at a pinball table, flip your heart out and get nowhere; the ball just goes right down the middle whatever you do.

Another time, you hardly touch it, and you've got yourself a replay. Like life itself, no matter how hard you do for whatever you're doing, the ball just goes down the middle. Then the phone will ring, and it's someone offering you an amazing job or sponsorship.

Most of the games I'm thinking of, such as tennis and squash, are safe. Perhaps when considerable danger creeps into the event, it's no longer a

game. There can be a terrible price to pay with aerobic flying. It does simple things such as rolls and loops in vintage biplanes, and there's a strict procedure for doing them.

Most aerobic manoeuvres are controlled stalls, which is a very exact science. Snooker uses the same precision, but if you miss the shot in snooker, then it's cursing and cursing. If you can't recover from an inverted flat spin in an aeroplane, then you can pay a most unpleasant price, and that for me is the difference between games and some of the things that I like to do.

Motor sport is not a game. I enjoy the challenge of trying to control a car on its limit going round a corner, or putting together a lap which is as quick as that car can go on a particular track on the day - but it can end up tragically.

The essence of a game ought to be that the downside isn't fatal.

## CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

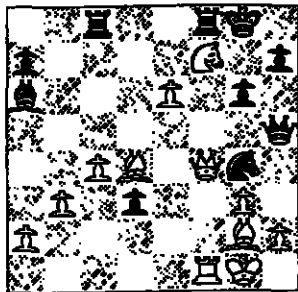
With one round left to play in the "Amber" rapidplay tournament in Monte Carlo, Vladimir Kramnik leads by half a point from Vassily Ivanchuk. In the early rounds, Kramnik built up what had looked like an unassailable lead, but he suffered a run of unlucky accidents in the second half of the event and the pack, which seemed at one stage almost to have given up chasing him, were again at his heels.

The one game that did more than any other to close the gap was Ivanchuk's win in his blindfold game against Kramnik. After the opening, the battle-lines were drawn when Black invaded his opponent's half of the board with 12...d4 and supported the pawn with 13...c5 and 14...e5. If Black's pawn wedge is not challenged, it will secure him a clear advantage.

Ivanchuk nibbled away at it with 17...exd4 when Kramnik rejected the natural recapture with the e-pawn in favour of the very aggressive 17...cxd4, leading to a volatile position after 19.f4.

Kramnik replied with 19...Bc5, threatening to win the queen with d3+, while also defending his d-pawn to make ...exf4 a more attractive option. 20.Qd2 both got the queen out of the way of the threat of d3+, while also preparing to recapture on f4, if necessary, with the queen.

20... Qb6 virtually forced White into a promising

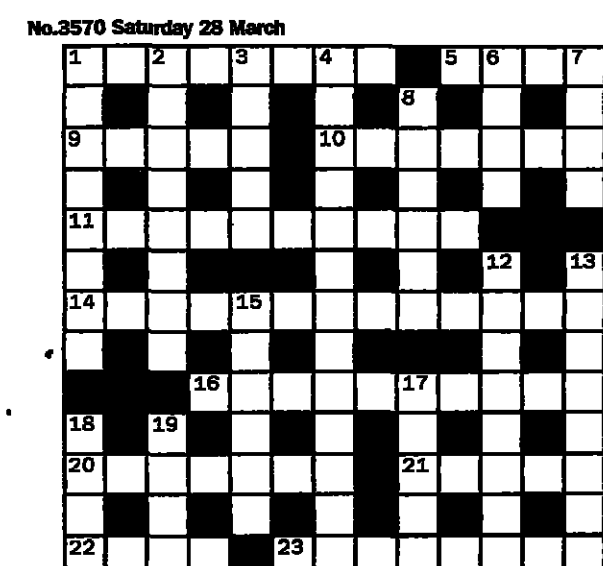


exchange sacrifice. After 23.Rxe1 Black could not move his knight from f6, but found a neat defence in 23...d3 (when exf6 loses to Rxe1+) and 24...Qd8 (when exf6 is met by Rxe1+ and Qxd4+).

25.Nxf7! was a clever way to solve White's problems. After 25...Kxf7 26.Bd5+, the bishop on d4 is shielded and White can play exf6 next. Kramnik went for complications, but fell for a neat combination at the end. In the diagram position, 29.Qxg4! Qxg4 30.Nb6 is mate.

**White: Vassily Ivanchuk**  
**Black: Vladimir Kramnik**  
1 d4 Nf6 16 Rd1 Re8  
2 c4 e6 17 exd4 cxd4  
3 Nf3 d5 18 Ng5 g6  
4 g3 Be7 19 f4 Bc5  
5 Bg2 0-0 20 Qd2 Qb6  
6 Qc2 c5 21 fxe5 Bb4  
7 0-0 cxd4 22 Qf2 Bxc1  
8 Nxd4 Nc6 23 Rxe1 d3  
9 Nxc6 bxc6 24 Bd4 Qd8  
10 b3 Bc5 25 Nxf7 Ng4  
11 Bb2 Rc8 26 Qf4 Qa5  
12 Nd2 d4 27 Rf1 Rf8  
13 Rf1 c5 28 e6 Qb5  
14 e3 e5 29 Qxg4 resigns  
15 Ng5 Bb6

## CONCISE CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Walking in step (8)
  - 5 Colouring agents (4)
  - 9 Bridge or tunnel charges (5)
  - 10 Person appointed (7)
  - 11 Spot cash (5,5)
  - 14 Counter-productive (4,9)
  - 16 Groups invited for job interviews (5,5)
  - 20 Cocktail (7)
  - 21 Male bird (5)
  - 22 Cable (4)
  - 23 Heavenly (8)
- DOWN**
- 1 Part of bed (8)
  - 2 Dependable (8)
  - 3 Hurried (5)
  - 4 Individualist (13)
  - 6 Tug (4)
  - 7 Carden but (4)
  - 8 Simple life-form (6)
  - 12 Talk out of something (8)
  - 13 Type of paper finish (8)
  - 15 Flower (6)
  - 17 Serving-pony (5)
  - 18 Gulf state ruler (4)
  - 19 Square (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

**ACROSS:** 1 Bully, 4 Hun (Bullion), 7 Iron, 8 Exchange, 9 Record player, 10 Centre, 13 Dental, 15 Civil Defence, 19 Sporting, 20 Fate, 21 Doe, 22 Delay. **DOWN:** 1 Barge, 2 Lineout, 3 Yield, 4 Heavy, 5 Nigeria, 6 Sealed, 11 Escaped, 12 Eclair, 14 Needful, 16 Verge, 17 Egged, 18 Caty.

## BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South

**NORTH**  
♦ Q 10 6  
♥ K 7 5 3  
♦ K 10 6 4  
♣ Q 6

**WEST**  
♠ 8 4 3  
♥ K Q 9 8 6 4  
♦ 8 3  
♣ K 5

**EAST**  
♠ K J 9 5 2  
♥ none  
♦ 9 7 5  
♣ 10 9 7 3 2

**SOUTH**  
♠ A 7  
♥ A J 2  
♦ A Q J 2  
♣ A J 8 4

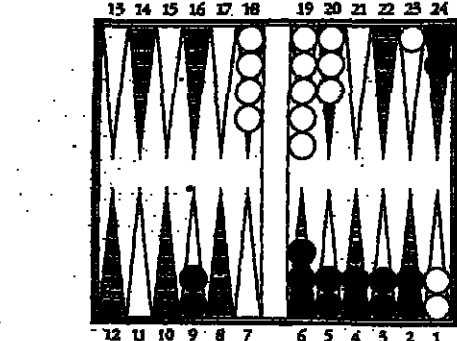
The contract and the opening lead were the same at both tables on this deal from a recent match, but the two declarers found different ways of going off in what should have been an easy contract. Neither South was prepared to discuss the matter, but I intercepted the match records before they "disappeared".

South opened Two No-trumps, North raised to game and West led ♥K against Three No-trumps. It was easy enough to win the first trick, but now the play diverged. One declarer continued with a low heart at trick two. West followed with the eight and dummy's ten won. It is true that South could still have succeeded by cashing winners and forcing West to discard a winning heart or bare his ♠K, but in practice declarer tried a simple club finesse and so went one down.

The other declarer, after crossing to dummy with a diamond, took an even earlier club finesse. He would have been home if the defence had continued hearts but, when in with ♠K, West smartly switched to a spade. Now there was no time for declarer to develop a second heart trick.

So what had they both missed? There was an absolutely foolproof approach: a low club from hand at trick two. If West has the king and takes it, there are nine top tricks. If East turns up with ♠K then he is on lead and cannot profitably attack spades, whoever holds the king. And if he defends passively, South has plenty of time to establish his second heart trick.

## BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Here's a proposition that gave Murray Sharp, the sartorial king of the Double Fives Club, much enjoyment. Black doubles; should White take? Murray, who once dropped a double, but so long ago that nobody remembers the details, promptly offered to play the White side as a proposition. In a proposition such as this Black pays White one point per game to take the double and then the two players agree to play either a set number of games or until the losing player wants to stop.

Murray couldn't put a foot wrong. Either Black crashed his board by rolling big numbers, or he would get a well-timed one-point game and hit a shot to win. He went home a big winner. A few nights later he chanced his arm and played the same proposition against Barry "Bigplay" McAdam. This time it all went wrong, and Murray quickly lost 30 points.

The difference lay not so much in the skill of the players, as this position is easy to play from either side, but in the vagaries of backgammon. At first sight this may look like a dreadful take, but although it is a drop it is not a drop by a huge amount. White does have two very reasonable winning game plans: Black crashing his board before he can escape one or both of his men, or White winning a well-timed one-point game, as Murray did in his first session. White will win fully 30 per cent of all games. What makes it a drop is the percentage of gammons that White loses when things go badly.

Over a short session of an hour or two, the defending side may get lucky. Over a longer period, Black will come out on top. Moral: when playing a proposition, choose one where your skill can make a difference. In this example the game plans are clearly defined and the result, at least in the short term, is determined mainly by the dice.

SPR 20 1998



## A little goes a long way

Making it: creating a patchwork quilt can be as intricate and complicated as you choose, but one thing's for certain: it will broaden your horizons. Sally Staples joins the material world



In stitches: a well conceived design is central to successful quilt making

Photograph: Tom Pileston

When Anne Waring signed up for a course in patchwork, quilting and appliqué, she thought the lessons would be built round sewing bits of fabric together and learning some embroidery techniques. What she did not bargain for was being invited to create her own designs.

"At school, I thought I was bad at art. I spent an entire term painting roseships, and eventually I was allowed to give it up. When I came here I thought I would never be able to design anything, but I've discovered I can, and it's a great confidence-booster."

Gillian O'Brien, tutor of the course, which leads to a City and Guilds Certificate, always enjoys showing students that they are not nearly as inept as they think. Design is an integral part of the course, whether in quilting techniques or in appliqué.

"One of the exercises in appliqué and embroidery begins when I bring in a vase

of flowers and ask the students first of all to draw what they see," she says. "It is better to use a Biro, because then they produce good lines. If you give them pencils they will fuss, and keep changing what they've drawn."

"The interesting thing is that each person will see those flowers in a different way and produce quite a different picture. It is not a question of getting it right or wrong; it is an exercise in gaining the confidence to express yourself."

From this initial design, the students then cut out pieces of fabric to echo the drawing. They are encouraged to cut freehand rather than trace their drawing on to material. The next stage involves ironing the flower shapes on to Bondaweb, a foundation that stops fabric from fraying and provides a stiff backing. The flowers can then be pinned on to a background material, ready to be sewn on with a variety of embroidery stitches.

Students learn a wide range of stitching, both by hand and on the sewing machines that line one side of the room. An experienced seamstress will pick up plenty of tips from the tutor, but if you are a complete beginner and can barely remember cross stitch from schooldays, it doesn't matter. In minutes you will be initiated into the intricacies of herringbone or buttonhole stitch.

Students work at their own speed – unsurprisingly, the class of 15 or so are all women – and can experiment with different stitches when sewing on each flower, leaf and stem. This teaches how to create different effects in appliqué, when a piece of fabric is embroidered on to a background. It is hard to believe that the immensely varied tableaux around the table were all inspired by the same vase of flowers; each one is completely individual in colour, style, shape and texture.

Gillian explains that the 35-week-long

course will allow students to build up a portfolio of work which includes patchwork quilting and embroidery techniques as well as giving them an introduction to design. Each session is three hours.

"We start the course by discussing the use of colour," she says, "building up from primary, then secondary colours; then we mix them to obtain a wide range and apply them to a simple chart. Nothing is taken for granted. Not everyone knows that mixing blue and yellow produces green."

Ann Clark has completed her vaseful of flowers and is now concentrating on Hawaiian patchwork, which involves folding a rectangular square of paper and then cutting shapes from it to form a pattern. Using it as a template, the exercise is repeated in fabric. Once pinned to a background, the patterned cut-outs are hemmed with invisible stitches to give a contrasting effect to that of ordinary appliqué.

"We have learned so many interesting

techniques, and it is great fun to sit and chat with the others," says Ann. "Gillian also encourages us to visit exhibitions and art galleries. There is so much you can learn about colour and perspective in fabric design by looking at paintings."

Ann is planning to start work on a quilt shortly, but is not as ambitious as Kay Roy-Price, who has been steadily working over three terms to make two quilts for her twins, now 20 months old.

"Basically I chose different materials, designed a pattern, cut out the material and pinned it together, and then tacked each square by hand. After that you have to sandwich the wadding between the front piece of material and the backing. I have used a series of little knots throughout the quilt to keep the wadding in position."

It sounds simple, but these quilts, designed in bright pink, yellow and blue checks, have been a real labour of love. Kay works on them only in class, where she finds

the space and concentration that are in short supply at home.

Simple quilting techniques on squares are also taught on the course, and have inspired Yvette Taylor to make one for her baby.

"I'd never used a sewing machine before, and I certainly don't have one at home, but I've learned a tremendous amount from this course. It's a mixed group of people, and offers a peaceful way of learning something useful and having a good chat."

Gillian O'Brien's course on patchwork, quilting, embroidery and appliqué at the Kensington and Chelsea College lasts 35 weeks, and costs £144 (0171-573-3600). Weekend courses in the subject are offered through 'The World of Embroidery' magazine, and more information can be obtained from the Embroiderers' Guild, Apartment 41, Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey (0181-943-1229).

## The beauty of time passing

You are about to be reminded that the modern house has no shortage of timekeepers. Tonight or tomorrow morning, as you wearily put forward the clocks on the video, fax, oven, microwave, hi-fi, etc, you may feel that the last thing you need is anything else to mark the passing of the hours. Yet, while the timers on the video and the rest of the kit may be reassuringly accurate, in the looks department something is surely missing.

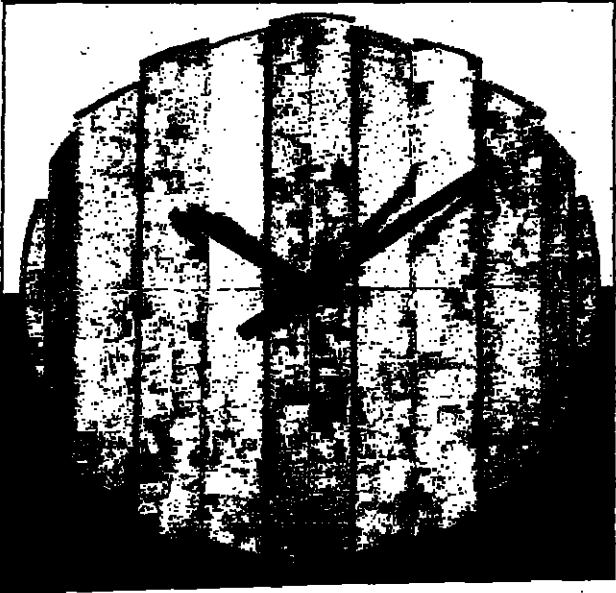
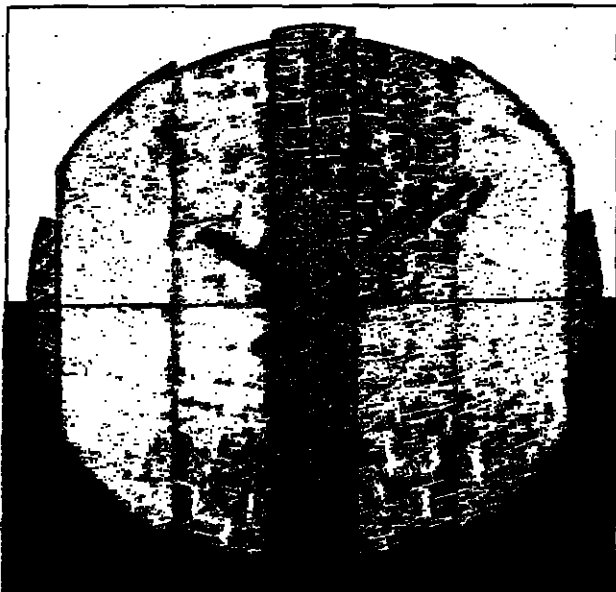
This is where Gordon Burnett comes in, for his metal timepieces are everything a digital display is not: colourful, imaginative, inspiring. He uses anodised aluminium, in which dyes impregnate the surface of the metal and are then sealed in permanently, to give him a startling range of hues to work with. "My clocks are a cross between something functional, and a painting or print," he says. "They occupy wall space, but they're not wholly serious in telling the time. They don't tell the time sloppily, of course, but they're something you can look at over a long period and continue to get something from."

Gordon's interest in clocks began in his second year at the Royal College of Art in London, where he was doing an MA in jewellery. Not surprisingly, the clocks he made at that stage were small and ornate, but once he left he scaled up his designs. That led to commissions from several businesses to create one-off pieces for their head offices. "The largest clock I made is in the Scottish Exhibition Centre in Glasgow, and it's 3 metres in diameter. It's made of glass fibre. I designed it, but it was made by a company in Derby. The largest number of clocks I've made was for a bank in Holland; they had 38 of the same type. But I've also made them for Next and WH Smith."

Not to mention Aberdeen City Council, the Bank of Dubai, the Canadian Tourist Commission, and so on.

You don't have to be a company to lay your hands on one of Gordon's anodised aluminium timepieces, however; he's

A clock designed specially for you? Spring forward and choose it, says Claire Gervat



more than happy to create something special for an individual. The first step in commissioning one of his clocks is to discuss budgets, bearing in mind that prices start at around £200 for the simplest piece. The next step is to work out where the clock will hang, as this will influence the final design. That doesn't necessarily require a personal visit from Gordon, which is fortunate if you

don't live within stomping distance of his home town of Aberdeen. "Looking at photographs would be fine," he comments. "Working in a domestic situation is the same process you would go through when dealing with a company. It's trying to create something that reflects the personality of the company or individual, and the ambience that they're trying to convey." Expect to wait around six to

eight weeks for your finished piece, since Gordon is also a full-time lecturer at the Grays School of Art, part of the Robert Gordon University, where he studied before he went to the RCA. It's an association that is proving to be fruitful for the designer, giving him opportunities and encouragement to experiment with new techniques and create innovative pieces for exhibitions in Scotland, Australia, Japan and elsewhere.

Take, for instance, his foray into the world of CAD/CAM (computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacture). This enables him to "construct" clocks on his trusty Apple Mac at home, which are then made on the computerised milling machine at the university. By feeding images into the computer – video footage of the seaside, patterned paper, even his other clocks – Gordon can create unique and fascinating surface decoration on the aluminium, which is emphasised by the way it is folded into light-reflecting shapes.

So does he believe that craftspeople in general will be using computers more and more in future? "I think there's beginning to be a place for them, but the cost of the manufacturing end of it is the tricky bit; the milling machine at college costs about £50,000." This certainly puts them out of reach of individual craftspeople, although, as Gordon points out, designs can still be passed on disk to manufacturing companies for them to make up. There's an ironic twist here. Gordon is prepared to work with complex computer programs to create beautiful timepieces for others with not a digital display in sight (and a well-hidden quartz movement). Think about that as you scour the house tonight for the instructions for how to change the time on the video-recorder.

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INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

## TRAVEL



### THE LOST WORLD

Christopher Ely heads to Venezuela in search of the legendary Angel Falls

plus: New York for kids, a complete guide

YOUR PRACTICAL GUIDE TO HOLIDAYS











# If you're tempted to discuss football with your children, skip it



**MIKE ROWBOTTOM**  
ON THE ALLEGIANCES OF THE YOUNG

THE playground was filled with parents and children awaiting the school bell, and an unofficial football game involving 10 or so boys provided a minor hazard for those who stood and chatted.

I mastered the temptation to join in without overwhelmingly difficulty. But I harboured a vestigial regret that no one was passing to me.

As I watched the ragged progress of the match I recalled fondly the innumerable hours of my life I had spent in similar scuffling pursuit.

Nothing changes, I mused. You can build all the Wendy houses you want, you can set up picnic tables, you can mark the playground with a stencil of the world's countries, but some

activities are ingrained in the psyche of the British child. Perhaps there is such a thing as a national characteristic, because, like generations before them, these boys...

Something had happened. The game had halted. "Let's make it basketball," shouted one of the larger players, snatching up the ball and bouncing it vigorously in front of him. He soon had his little fellows clamouring excitedly around.

Presumably William Webb Ellis displayed similar charisma on that fateful day when another perfectly good game of football was ruined. If only someone on that Rugby School pitch had had the sense to remove the ball from his hands there and then and drop it to its rightful place.

Speaking personally, as I do, I hold Webb Ellis's companions responsible for three wasted sporting years. Custom, practice and snobbery dictated that football was excluded from our school curriculum. Instead, we had to endure the zealous urging of our diminutive but ferocious games master, Mr Barrett, to "bind and push."

I suppose that old resentment may have accounted for a small part of the dismay I felt on witnessing this impromptu alteration of a sporting agenda.

But for the most part, the incident served only to confirm my growing fears about the fickle relationship these kids displayed towards sport. Anyone would have thought it was purely a matter of enjoyment.

I confess, I was already troubled by discussions I had had with my children about which football team they had chosen to follow.

My darker fears were confirmed by information acquired from one of my eldest daughter's friends, who told me - without appearing to be in the least bit perturbed by the information - that one person in the class supported 10 Premiership teams. And 10 in the First Division.

Now there, it seems to me, is a child that needs to be stopped. What kind of an example is that setting to others?

Because it is important to set an example in these matters. For my part, I have tried, tactfully, to bring up the subject of West Ham United whenever

possible in our household. Of course, I don't expect my children to follow the same team I do. I just hope.

I have spoken to my five-year-old son about their nice shirts. The sky blue is not so easy to sell, so I steer clear of that. "I know red is your favourite colour, but these have got a kind of red in them. Claret is a kind of red, you know..."

So far, that particular line of persuasion doesn't appear to have been effective. A few weeks ago, he announced that Manchester United were the best team in the world. When asked why, he replied: "Because they kick the fastest." I couldn't think of anything to say to that.

The other day, apropos of nothing, he announced that

Chelsea were the best team in the world. When asked why, he replied: "I don't know."

My eldest daughter has a more stable approach to the serious business of choosing a football team - but the news, from the West Ham United point of view, is not good. For her last birthday, she requested a Liverpool shirt.

Obviously, you worry for your children at crucial times in their development, knowing that one bad decision can have ramifications throughout the rest of their life. But there it is.

I couldn't be sure that she knows most of the players, or too much of the club's illustrious history. But any doubts she may have had about the benefit of continuing to support

them have been expunged by the fact that Liverpool's England midfielder Jamie Redknapp is going out with Louise.

Who knows. If the announcement of Posh Spice's engagement to David Beckham had come earlier, we might have had a Manchester United supporter in the house.

As footballing controversy swirls around our kitchen table, my younger daughter remains aloof. At the end of a recent, fervent discussion on the topic, her sister demanded that she made her own position clear.

"I don't support a football team," she said with quiet dignity. "I like skipping."

Now what could be sweeter than that? You know where you are with skipping.

## Questions for Lewis as Briggs fills gap

### Boxing

By Ken Jones  
in Atlantic City

THE QUESTION Lennox Lewis cannot answer concerns the intrigue that thwarts his ambition to be known as the undisputed heavyweight champion. How long is Lewis prepared to wait for a crack at fulfilment? "I'm a patient man," he said after weighing in for tonight's defence of the World Boxing Council title at the Convention Centre here.

The only contest that makes any heavy-weight sense, a showdown between Lewis and Evander Holyfield, is on hold for familiar political and legal reasons. So Lewis, 32, marks time, proclaiming that he is prepared to fight anyone, anywhere, anytime.

Tonight is Shannon Briggs, who stepped into Lewis's sights as an opponent to be going on with after gaining a close and controversial decision over George Foreman last November. "I'm not taking this guy lightly," Lewis said, "because anything can happen in heavy-weight boxing."

Lewis said something similar last year before knocking out the supposedly dangerous Andrew Golota in one round,

proving too big and powerful for the Polish contender.

"It's the same with everyone Lennox fights," Lewis's perky manager, Frank Maloney, goes around saying. "They start shaking as soon as they look at him."

At a press conference earlier this week Lewis stared hard at Briggs. Briggs turned away. "I knew he would," Lewis said. "I didn't have to say anything, just had to look at him."

Emanuel Steward, who trains Lewis now but was in the opposite corner the night Oliver McCall knocked Lewis out, believes he is working with potentially the best heavy-weight in history. Potential at 32? "You know what I mean," Steward said. "Lennox has got everything: size, power and boxing skills. If it wasn't for boxing politics he would already be known as the best ever."

A complaint about Lewis on this side of the Atlantic (and in his homeland) is lack of identity. "The public don't get to know him," someone said this week. "He's got no personality. Who does he represent? Great Britain, Canada where he grew up or the Caribbean where his roots are?"

Lewis's associates, especially Maloney, make a great deal of Lewis's heritage but his mid-Atlantic accent works against



Weight of expectation: Lennox Lewis at the weigh-in yesterday for the Briton's world title defence against Shannon Briggs today

Photograph: AP

them. In any case nationalism does not figure much in the minds of American fight fans. They see two men in the ring, not one country against another. This irritates Maloney, who has a fondness for dressing up in union colours. "I don't get it," he says. "We're British and proud of it."

Steward's mind is on the possibility that Briggs could give Lewis more of a problem than people imagine. "I don't think Briggs did enough to beat Foreman, who should have got the decision," he said, "but he stood up well to some heavy punching. The idea that Briggs can't take a shot grew up when he was

knocked out by Darroll Wilson. He wasn't right that night and looked different again in the Foreman fight. I make Briggs a good opponent for Lennox and it could be an interesting fight."

However, as this is a voluntary defence for Lewis, we can be sure that Briggs would not be coming out of the opposite corner if he had the potential to cause an upset.

Going along with the party line, Lewis refuses to suggest the time by which he expects Briggs to realise that the task is too much for him. "I'm not saying that I will knock this guy out because the important thing is simply to win the fight," he said.

The loss to McCall was a big disappointment for Lewis but there have been others. In 1992, boxing's biggest funder, the cable television network Home Box Office, offered Riddick Bowe \$15m (£10m) and Lewis \$3m to stage a rematch of the 1988 Olympic final. It did not happen. Another opportunity of climbing back in with Bowe vanished when Lewis was knocked out by McCall, the only blemish on his record. A projected contest against Mike Tyson was fouled up by legal wrangling.

Lewis is again looking into the future, trying to keep the pressure on Holyfield, who has signed to fight Henry Akin-

wande on 6 June at Madison Square Garden. "I think Holyfield is feeling the pressure already," Lewis said. "That's why he is fighting Akinwande."

When Akinwande fought Lewis last year he was disqualified for persistent holding. "I intimidated him so much it was all he could do," Lewis said, "but I don't think he'll be intimidated by Holyfield. That bothers me, because Holyfield could lose and then where would I be?"

The general consensus is that Briggs will start fast against Lewis, who is least effective when forced to fight off the back foot. "It's no good backing off

Lennox," the veteran trainer Lou Duva said. Duva was in Golota's corner the night Lewis overwhelmed him. "I don't know what got into my guy," he said. "We'd worked on a way to fight Lewis but Golota's mind was all over the place."

Lewis puts it all down to intimidation. "They just crumble when they see just how big and powerful I am. One look is enough."

For looking at Briggs tonight Lewis is being paid \$4m, taking his ring earnings past \$50m. Once he gets this job done, probably around the fifth round, he will go back to looking at Holyfield.

## A bold start for Captain Kirkham

### Hockey

By Bill Colwell

ENGLAND'S youth teams were off to a good start in the Home Countries quadrangular tournament in Dublin yesterday, the Under-16s showing the way with a 3-0 win against Scotland in a workmanlike performance.

Glenn Kirkham, the captain, opened the scoring at a penalty corner in the ninth minute, with second-half goals coming from David Tyler and Lee Rimmer.

In the Under-18 game between the two countries, Mark Ralph gave Scotland the lead at a penalty corner also in the ninth minute but thereafter it was nearly all one-way traffic as England went on to win 4-2. Matthew Taylor claimed the equaliser for England just before the interval and then put them in the lead in the 50th minute. A minute later James Davies scored the first of his two goals, split by Scotland's second from Ken Morrice.

At home the last games of the National League Premier Division are scheduled for tomorrow, with the one issue remaining to be settled - who will join Doncaster in the First Division next season? Barford Tigers, on 14 points, entertain Hounslow and must win to keep their slender hopes alive.

If Barford win and Beeston, who are one point ahead, but without three first-choice players on duty in Dublin, do not beat East Grinstead, then the result of Hounslow's match next Saturday with Beeston, postponed from last Sunday, will decide the issue.

## Leopards' trip to the foxhole

### Basketball

By Richard Taylor

GREATER London Leopards and Birmingham Bulls must fight their way out of the Budweiser League's equivalent of the trenches tonight, as they take their battle for the championship into the final week of the regular season.

The Leaders and defending champions, Leopards, are away to Derby Storm at the Moxhams Leisure Centre and Bulls face Thames Valley Tigers at the Bracknell Leisure Centre, certainly the two most cramped, raucous and intimidating venues in the League.

The Leopards coach, Billy Mims, has described Moxhams as a "loud foxhole" is a compliment. "It's one of the toughest dens to play in and try and sneak a win. They have tremendous home support." Adding to his worries is a spectacular run of form for the coach, Jeff Jones, and the Storm as they push for a place in the play-offs. "We're playing tougher now," Jones said, "and smarter down the stretch. The players have a target and they see it's achievable."

Bulls, two points behind Leopards but with a game in hand, cannot afford another defeat. But Bracknell is a demanding venue against a Tigers team still trying for a top four finish. "Playing on their floor has to be one of the toughest road trips in the League," said the Bulls coach, Mike Finger,

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

- The captaincy has never been a burden to me. Mike Atherton, resigning as England cricket captain.
- We had suffered a bad defeat. We had lost a captain after 52 Tests and we had players who were very disappointed with their own games. There was nothing that really needed to be said by me. I've said enough in the past. David Lloyd, England's cricket coach, after the final Test defeat in Antigua.
- The most important thing is to get Rangers into the Premiership. Paul Gascoigne forgets that he has moved to Middlesbrough.
- I'm beating demons every day but there has always been an angel on my shoulder looking after me. John Daly, on his battle with booze as he clocks up a year off the bottle.
- I could hear bells long after hours. Gunnar Krantz, Swedish Match's skipper, after being hit in the ear by a flying fish in the Whitbread yacht race.

## Superior boat speed can put pressure on Swedish Match

WE ARE on the run-in to Florida. It has been hot, unbelievably hot, and we are under pressure again. Unless there is a major change in the weather, which I cannot see on any charts, this leg is over and there will just be a procession into Fort Lauderdale. For the last four days I have not just been praying but genuinely expecting the wind to get lighter, meaning there were places still to be gained and lost. They may not have been wide open, but we sure wanted to win some.

The weather did not play into our hands and complement our strengths. We knew we had enough pace in easier, running conditions and should have been able to grind down at least a couple of the boats ahead of us. It was always unlikely we could catch Lawrie Smith in Silk Cut, where navigator Vincent Geake seems to have done a good job, and overall leader Paul Cayard in EF Language.

But we wanted to get ahead of Swedish Match and Innovation Kvaerner, particularly Swedish Match, who takes our



**GRANT DALTON**

The skipper of Merit Cup is hoping for better weather in the Whitbread Round the World Race

second overall position if she beats us. We could see how anxious they were to achieve this when they came up to cover us on Wednesday and protect their extra points. At that time we thought there could be some fundamental differences in boat speed that could

be to our advantage. The distances between the boats on the water were not that great, and there was still time to grind down those missing miles. But the big breezes continued for what has been an amazingly fast leg.

I don't think we have sailed a particularly clever leg, and a couple of times we have been in the wrong place, so a couple of times we have had to catch up. But I liked our spot on the race track for the end run into Florida and thought those who had been predicting a finish they have been wildly optimistic. As we slow, and we already have, I think it will be Monday night, even Tuesday morning, before we finish.

Not that we won't be glad to swap what we have for the Florida weather. As on most boats, we have been having a lot of trouble with skin infections. These are, mainly, caused by sweating. But the incredible heat and humidity have been, I think, worse than on any other Whitbread. It is

even worse when you are trying to sleep in a bunk that is trying to turn itself into a miniature swimming pool of your own sweat.

The only other medical problem continues to be my slowly mending broken collarbone. It is a major irritation not to be able to do more work than I do around the boat. I am constantly on painkillers, which allows me to do some things, though not steering, so I am not a passenger. Still, I am well below par. I think it is coming right, and we will take another look at it once ashore. There should be no problem by the time we start for Baltimore in a month's time.

Our real battle now is with Swedish Match and a Chesire Racing that will be looking for big result on the next leg into their home town. We are starting to get to the business end of the Whitbread now, when the final silverware is allocated. Paul Cayard may be establishing a stranglehold on the Volvo Trophy. We, at least, want the colour of ours to be silver, too.

## Mini-skirt helps Geake's air flow

By Stuart Alexander  
Sailing Correspondent

LAWRIE SMITH was still heading for an impressive win in the sixth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race yesterday. With less than 500 miles to run to Fort Lauderdale, Smith's British boat, Silk Cut, had pushed her lead over Paul Cayard in EF Language up to 22 miles, and was romping away at more than 15 knots.

Major efforts were being made at the Port Everglades marina in Florida to have everything in place for a finish tomorrow afternoon, four days ahead of schedule.

Even so, there are one or two syndicates facing problems when they arrive from the previous stop-over in Brazil, because containers of equipment and repair workshops have yet to be delivered.

While Adrian Stead on Silk Cut was revelling in a "grey and blustery day" he was also reporting the need for a wash and brush-up when they dock. "Spotty everything has afflicted a few of the crew,

mainly a heat and salt rash," Stead said. "Navigator Vincent Geake has resorted to wearing a mini-skirt arrangement to get some air around his plums! As a result he has earned the name 'Victoria'. A good sauna and some fresh water should do the trick."

However, the fast-running conditions were not to everyone's liking. Grant Dalton would prefer conditions to be lighter for fifth-placed Merit Cup. He was hoping that the presence of black clouds and sheets of rain could mean the wind was about to get tricky.

"If we are going to catch the boats in front, we are going to need the weather to get a little mixed up," Dalton said. "Even then we might not have as much runway as we need to overhaul the pace-setters."

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE: Sixth leg, 4,700 miles. Sea Route: Oryx to Fort Lauderdale, US; 1 Silk Cut (GB) 1. Smith 0850 miles to Fort Lauderdale (US) 2 EF Language (GB) 2. Cayard 227 miles behind leader; 3 Swedish Match (Swe) 3. Krantz +487; 4 Innovation (Denmark) (Nor) 4. Frostad +508; 5 Merit Cup (Monaco) 6 Dalton +1108; 8 Chesire Racing (US) 8. Kesteven +824; 7. Rishbeth (US) 7. Sandstrom +1121; 9. Brunel (Surrey) (Neth) 9. Haver +1755; 10. EF Education (Swe) 10. G. Gullik +2165.



# Pienaar's desire fuels Sarries' cup ambition

By Chris Hewett  
Rugby Union Correspondent

THEY may have just experienced the rugby equivalent of 15 rounds with Lemax Lewis - or, to use a more brutal metaphor still, 15 minutes of negotiation with Cliff Brittle - but Saracens fervently believe they are in sufficiently good shape to survive the Northampton ambush at Franklins Gardens this afternoon. This much is certain: if Tony Dwyer's weary foot soldiers are to prove as good as

their word and beat a fresher, fitter Sarries side to a place in the Tetley's Bitter Cup final, they will need to fly successfully in the face of all sporting logic.

There is only one thing more exhausting than winning a titanic top-of-the-table struggle on enemy soil, and that is losing one. Well though they performed at Newcastle on Wednesday night, the Londoners succumbed by five measly points; a result that should, in theory at least, have reduced them to a rag-tag collection of shambling mental

wrecks. "They fought us to a standstill, so I can't imagine how they hope to get themselves up for another huge match in so short a space of time," said Steve Bates, the Newcastle coach.

It is probably beyond Northampton's imagining, too. The Saints may have forfeited the influential services of their captain, Tim Rodber, but not even the most determined United Nations weapons inspector would relish a trip to the Franklins Gardens bunker just at the moment. "The place is

like a pressure cooker," said Jon Sleightholme, their former international wing, yesterday. "Things are coming to the boil and at two this afternoon, the whole of Northampton will be out there on the pitch with us."

And yet, Saracens have developed an esprit de corps of remarkable depth and potency this season, the result of Francois Pienaar's primal competitive instinct combined with an emotional collective desire to send Michael Lynagh and Philippe Sella into retirement with gold

medals around their necks rather than gold watches on their wrists. As Pienaar remarked in the aftermath of Wednesday's little epic: "If we play with the same skill and determination we've just showed out there, we can beat Northampton."

"Two games of this magnitude inside 72 hours is, of course, ridiculous, but it's the job of the management and myself to pick everyone up. I have to admit that had we played badly against Newcastle and lost, it would have been terri-

bly difficult to lift the spirits in time. But we didn't play badly; we played at a high pace and showed real commitment. Rugby is often as much about resilience in adversity as quality on the pitch and I think we have the character to respond."

Wasps, who revealed more character than anyone in winning last season's league title, will need to reproduce a fair proportion of it at Loftus Road this afternoon if they are to prevent the dangerous dark horses from Sale reaching their

second successive cup final. Unlike Sarries, their weariness has more to do with the dispiriting burden of under-achievement than the ravages of an intensely physical Premiership run-in and in many ways, it is a more corrosive condition.

All the same, the return of Alex King at outside-half, the spectacular form of Simon Shaw in the second row and the pride and passion that habitually oozes from the veins of Lawrence Dallaglio should prove too rich a brew for the

northerners, especially now that Simon Mannix has left the club under a cloud and David Rees, the sparky England wing, has given best to a particularly ill-timed groin injury.

An all-London final, then? Probably. But as Dallaglio went out of his way to emphasise earlier this week, form means nothing on last-four day. "Like every game, it's about 80 minutes of effort," he said. "Somehow, though, these particular 80 minutes bring a pressure all of their own."

## Invisible man turns Wasps eye-catcher

Chris Hewett talks to the awesome lock whose rediscovered sting could prove the end of Sale's Twickenham dream today

IT WAS, without doubt, one of the more remarkable rugby achievements of the century. Regardless of the fact that he tipped the scales at 21st - "one at a time, please," came the anguished cry from a chorus of creaking speak-your-weight machines - and stood 6ft 9in in his size umpteen socks, Simon Shaw contrived to make himself

invisible for the first three months of a Wasps career specifically designed to keep him in the public eye.

And how he paid for his subterranean profile. Clive Woodward and the Club England hierarchy made no serious attempt to track down the most explosively athletic lock forward of his generation; rather, they turned to Garath Archer, an old team-mate at Bristol, and fell in love with the Geordie's unsophisticated, teak-hard brand of no nonsense aggression.

By the end of last autumn's four-Test Sanza series, Danny Hewett had also secured a place in Woodward's affections, and with Martin Johnson unchallengeable as the foreman of the Red Rose engine room, Shaw had completed a depressing journey from hero to zero, from top of the world to bottom of the scrumheap.

He took the precaution of arming himself with a return ticket, however, and he is now well on the road back to fame and fortune. "Almost without warning," he has hit a purple patch of club form and his colleagues at Wasps confidently expect him to produce a decisive

performance in this afternoon's Tetley's Bitter Cup semi-final with Sale. What is more, Johnson's recurring groin problems may well free up a place on England's summer tour of the southern hemisphere. Suddenly, next year's World Cup is back on the Shaw agenda in capital letters.

Some of the 24-year-old Shaw's recent rugby has been on the stratospheric side of top-notch - "we've turned in a fair bit of rubbish on occasions, but Shaw's bang on his game," agrees Lawrence Dallaglio, the Wasps and England captain - and any second row capable of catching a wing as quick as Gloucester's Brian Johnson from behind has plenty going for him. Certainly, the Wasps backroom staff are talking up his chances of a representative recall.

"I couldn't be more delighted with his progress," said Rob Smith, the Wasps and England A coach, this week. "Any player takes time to settle at a new club and Simon's was no different after his move here from Bristol. There were fitness problems, too, and I think we all appreciate now that changes in the line-out laws make life difficult for him. A 21-stoner is pretty valuable in a jungle, but he's bloody hard to lift. The fact that Simon has shed two stones - and it had to be two stones of muscle bulk, because he carries very little body fat - proves just how determined he is to get back."

Rather like the ancient walls of Jericho, Shaw came tumbling



Out of the woods: After loss of form and loss of weight, Simon Shaw is now playing his best club rugby with Wasps

Photograph: Peter Jay

down just when he seemed at his most impregnable. A fixture in Jack Rowell's England side and an automatic choice for the Lions' squad, he was a white-hot favourite to partner Johnson in the series with the Springboks. God was in his rugby heaven and all was right with the world. Until, that is, Jeremy Davidson of Ireland steamed up on the rails and carried on galloping all the way into the Test team.

"What happened to me on the Lions tour hit me for six, to be honest with you," Shaw said. "I've never really spoken about it in public, but I felt there was an element of scapegoating when it came to the Test selection and it just so happened that I was in the wrong place, or the wrong side, at the wrong time. I played in most of the hard

Western Province, Northern Transvaal, Natal - and I was happy with my form, but Jerry was also playing extremely well in a midweek side that was scrummaging more effectively and the selectors went for him.

"Funny enough, I played the game of my life against Free State between the first and second Tests, but by then it was too late to alter anything. That's not to say the tour wasn't a fantastic experience, because it was. But it dawned on me during those weeks in South Africa that things had changed pretty radically and that I would have to adapt my game to make up the lost ground."

That root and branch reconstruction work was interrupted by a recurrence of the ankle trouble that has plagued Shaw since he first shredded ten-

sons and ligaments by the dozen during Bristol's ill-fated tour match with Transvaal in 1995.

"I'll always have problems with the ankle," he says, wincing at the mere thought of an injury that left his right foot at 180 degrees to his leg and the rest of a gnarled Bristol pack feeling physically sick and emotionally shattered at the sight and extent of the damage.

"Like any new boy, I was expected to earn a stripe or two in the Wasps second team at the start of the season, so I played on a rutted pitch at Sudbury, turned the ankle and that was that for a couple of months. But there were problems of adjustment as well. I'd spent the whole of my senior career at Bristol and it took time to feel a part of what Wasps were all about.

"Initially, I wasn't sure what was expected of me. I concentrated on getting involved in the loose, but I kept myself too wide in defence and failed to register the tackle counts the Wasps coaches were used to. Together with my fitness problems, it made first-team selection a bit of a struggle for a while and gave England every excuse to ignore me.

"When I started to miss out on England A games, I really was concerned. I was desperate to stay involved and although the selectors tried to reassure me by saying 'Look, we've seen you play at Test level and we know what you can do, so it makes more sense for us to look at a few other people', it was a bad time. In the end, what national coach is going to pick a player who isn't playing for his club?"

"Now I understand exactly what Wasps want from me, I feel much happier. I'm perfectly comfortable at just under 19 stones, my tackle count is up into double figures and over the last couple of months, I've played something approaching my best rugby. Actually, I don't think I've ever performed better at club level.

"There was never much doubt in my mind that Wasps' style of play would suit me and while the season has not gone to plan from the club's point of view as well as my own, we're in a cup semi-final with a Twickenham place on the end of it.

"I came here to win things, and given that the cup is all we can win this time round, everything depends on victory over Sale."

## Brittle threat to clubs' cup cash

IT IS far too early to talk about an endgame, but the interminable dispute between Cliff Brittle's wing of the Rugby Football Union and England's increasingly flabbergasted cabal of Premiership clubs is about to take what may be a decisive turn for the worse, writes Chris Hewett.

Brittle, the chairman of the RFU's management board, has threatened to withhold money to which the clubs claim they are entitled and they will meet counsel next week to discuss issuing a writ.

What is more, they have privately agreed to take the strongest possible action against any England player signing a new contract with the union that conflicts with his club agreement. "No club would select the player and no club would play against any side who did attempt to field him," said a club's insider last night. "As far as legal action over the money is concerned, we have been told that we are on the strongest imaginable legal ground."

As expected, the management board this week rejected the clubs' proposal to expand both divisions of the Premiership to 14-team leagues next season. Brittle then wrote to Donald Kerr, the chairman of the clubs' umbrella organisation, threatening to withhold Tetley's Bitter Cup receipts and RFU grant money in response to their decision to boycott all European rugby next term.

"We are amazed that Mr Brittle should threaten us in this way and it is very unfortunate that he should seek to link Carlsberg-Tetley to an unrelated issue the day before the semi-finals of the cup," said Doug Ash, the chief executive of English First Division Rugby. "According to our very strong legal opinion, the RFU has absolutely no grounds."

## Smart money on Monie's men to trouble Tallet's Broncos

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

A PERFECTLY respectable case could be argued that the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final that would do the game as a whole the most good would be between London and Sheffield.

The Broncos and the Eagles would both boost their profiles in cities where rugby league's roots are relatively shallow if they were Wembley-bound after this weekend, as well as reminding a wider world that the code has made some modest progress in expanding out of its heartland. Wigan and Salford

will have other priorities entirely.

In the first semi-final, at Headingley this afternoon, Salford can claim to have at least as good a back division as Sheffield, who replace the suspended Keith Senior with Willie Morgan after the Australian centre came through an A team comeback safely.

But the Eagles have John Lawless back at hooker and, if Paul Broadbent and Dale Laughton can reproduce the mighty form they showed at Castleford in the last round, the Sheffield front row could force Salford on to the back foot.

The Reds have the highly

effective triangle of Steve Blakeley, Josh White and Martin Crompton, but the kicking game of Mark Aston is another factor that could just give the Eagles the edge.

Although Wigan and London were the two sides the others wanted to avoid in the semi-final draw, neither have had to fulfil their potential in the cup so far. When they meet at Huddersfield tomorrow, they will need to.

The London coach, Tony Currie, believes that his new forwards have yet to adjust to the different rhythms of the British game, coming as they do from Australia, where an unlimited

interchange rule is in operation. If the likes of Mark Carroll and Grant Young do start to fire, they will be a handful for anyone.

The key to the match, though, could be the two stand-offs. Tallet's Tallet makes an unscheduled early return to the Broncos and rugby league after being released by Harlequins for this weekend and probably for the whole season, and Currie has had no qualms about throwing him straight back into the fray.

"I've no worries about it at all," he insisted. "We've had our best training sessions of the year since he's been back with us and

he will add a lot to the side." Wigan's John Monie was critical of his No 6 after the victory over St Helens in the last round, observing that Henry Paul had been "tentative".

A calf injury could have been partly responsible, but Monie is not averse to firing a warning shot across the bows of players not performing to their maximum.

He did it, to some effect, with Neil Cowie before the Saints game. Now that Paul is fully fit, the time is right for him to show his coach that he remains a match-winner.

Wigan make just one change, Denis Betts starting in

place of Mick Cassidy. Tallet's return allows Peter Gill to move back to the Broncos' second row, alongside Steele Retchless.

Retchless has the name of a Mills and Boon hero, but looks, with his balding head and relatively slight physique, like the club accountant who has decided to join in at training.

He is a relentless worker and tackler who has so far been the pick of London's new imports. If Wigan click, he will have plenty to do - but the money in the cup must always be on Monie's men eventually getting on top of him and his teammates.

## Hull face an uncertain future

By Dave Hadfield

THE FUTURE of Super League newcomers Hull is uncertain after their chairman, David Lloyd, stormed out of a meeting yesterday when he failed to get authority for a new share issue.

Lloyd, who controls the rugby club as well as Hull City Football Club, said that he would be recalling his loans to Hull when shareholders voted against his plan.

"That's it, I'm gone," Lloyd said after former chairman Roy Waudby led opposition to the proposal to underwrite a £500,000 share issue. Waudby, the second largest shareholder,

said he wanted to stop Lloyd taking control of the club "on the cheap" with 10 million shares priced at just 5p. That proposal, according to Waudby, would have greatly devalued the shares bought by supporters at £1 each.

Lloyd had loaned the Sharks £500,000 to strengthen the team on their promotion to Super League and the share issue was intended to repay the loan.

The Rugby League is to monitor developments over the weekend. Nick Fozzard, the Huddersfield prop, will be able to play in the Super League opener against Bradford next Friday after escaping a ban despite being sent off against Warrington last week.

## Eubank was probably thinking: 'I have failed!.. They still think I'm from another planet'



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

COMEDienne in grey wig and charity shop dress gets celebrity guests on her show and takes the piss. They respond by playing along or displaying varying degrees of shirtness. Everyone goes home.

Mrs Maume (BBC1) is a one-joke show, and perhaps should have been a one-series show. You can always guess how particular guests are going to react, and the only variation is when someone like Bernard Manning comes along to subvert the formula, in his case by the simple tactic of being odious and repellent. Or there's a one-off like Chris Eubank, who behaved in his usual manner, like an alien beamed down to inculcate humankind into his planet's ways and demonstrate (unsuccessfully) that, despite all physical and mental indications, they're really just like us.

This week's opening guest, Barry McGuigan, being a Really Nice

Bloke, presented a dilemma. How could Mrs Maume possibly say nasty things about him? Especially as every mildly amusing remark sent him into life-threatening fits of laughter. So it was pleasing at the beginning when he played the unwitting deconstructionist, violating the show's central conceit by mentioning that he'd met her mum before the show. He hadn't, of course. He'd met Caroline Aherne's mum. No Barry, this isn't real life, it's only the telly.

Mrs Maume looked embarrassed (in fact, Aherne looked embarrassed) and stage-whispered, "Don't say that!" McGuigan, realising what he'd done, threw himself about the sofa in paroxysms of discomfiture, then compounded his faux pas by turning to Mrs Aherne in the mock audience saying, "Sorry, Maureen."

With Aherne unable to take the rise out of her guest, the whole point of the programme had gone, leaving only little conversational run-ups to her prepared jokes, the best of which came when McGuigan, asked about women boxers, said that although it was their democratic right, he felt uneasy because of "wombs and other parts of the anatomy." Aherne replied: "Well, the lovely thing is, in here, most of us have had our wombs removed anyway."

Well, I smiled faintly. (There was passing evidence from Aherne of Eubank's strangeness, incidentally. "I was a bit worried about him," she said. "He didn't know what was happening, and after the show me and Ann went back to see him in the dressing-room - he was punching his own face." He was probably thinking to himself, "I have failed! I

have failed to appear normal! They still think I'm from another planet!")

McGuigan was followed by the fiddling Villa fan, Nigel Kennedy, who began by giving him a little vote of thanks for visiting Ireland. True, he did have fans north and south of the border, but to link him to the peace process itself seemed overly grateful.

He wasn't finished there, however, serenading the former Clones Cyclone with a rendition of the tune his father used to sing before his fights. *Londonderry Air*. It sounds like a sickly sweet business. But Barry's eyes were brimming. Oh, all right, damn it, it was a genuinely touching moment, marred only by the singalong caterwauling of Aherne's gay panthers, none of whom allowed their enjoyment to be spoiled by not knowing any of the words beyond "...and down the mountainside."

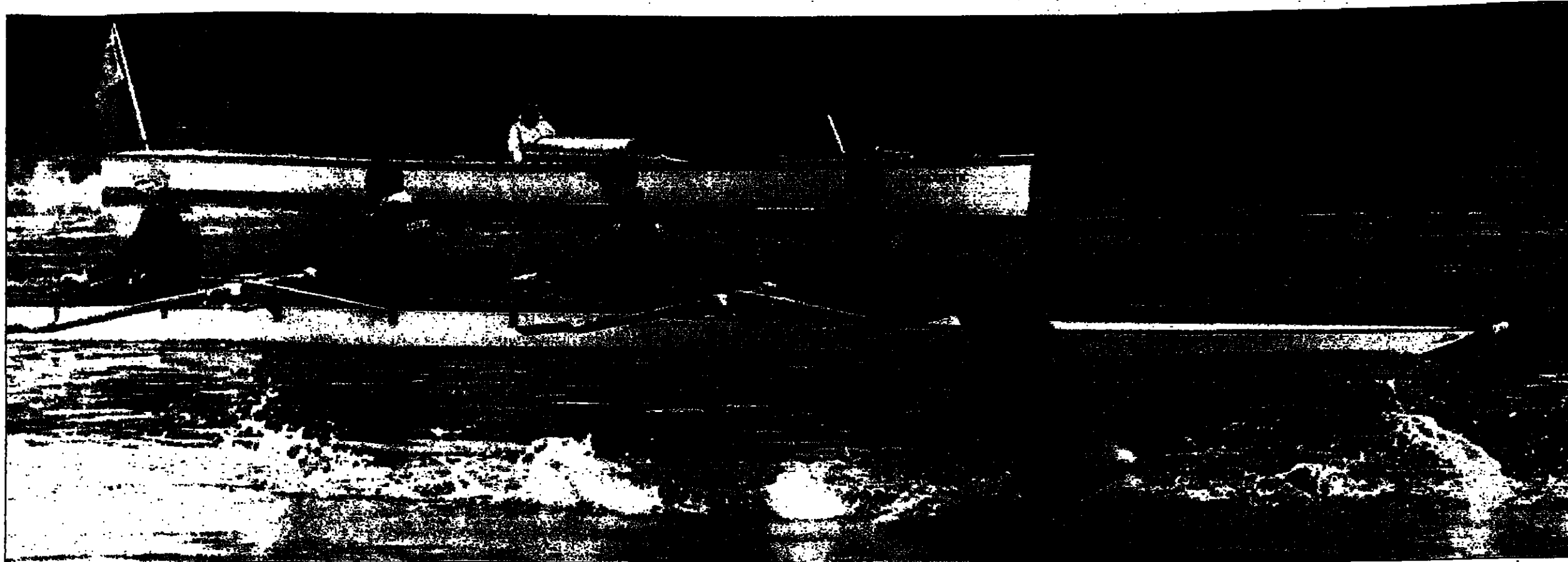
Afterwards, the lads indulged in some male bonding on the sofa. "That's for my dad," McGuigan said of Kennedy's performance. "Your dad," the violinist said pointing at him, with the heavy emphasis of a closing-time philanthropist. For a second, the two of them sat in silence with the intent expressions of drunks trying to express their feelings about their best mate. You almost wanted them to let it all hang out - "I really, really love you! Come here, you big bastard, and give us a hug!"

There was a fascinating hour and five minutes of much-delayed highlights from the Winter Paralympics in Nagano on BBC2 this week, which was a bit on the stinky side when you consider the relatively intensive coverage the Olympics enjoyed. It was also apparent that able-bodied Auntie Beeb hadn't bothered to ask any-

one to stay on in Japan, the commentaries quite audibly emanating from a cubicle in Television Centre. Still, the papers don't do much better, so I'd better shut up.

I was intending to cast my rod in the waters of Fish TV (Sky Sports 3), hoping they would be stocked to overflowing with chances for a cheap laugh. Sadly, I could do no more than dip my toes. But then again I'm not an angler, so what could I expect? There was as much going on as in one of those New Age aquarium videos. The quintessential exchange, and the one that pushed my mental off button, came a few minutes in.

"What do we do now?" "Well, we cast... and wait." After that for me, I'm afraid, despite the absence of any Cosa Nostra connection, it was a case of "he sleeps with the fishes".



# Tall order for Oxford in land of Light Blue giants

**By Hugh Matheson**

**THE Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race will be a test of power versus glory. The power rests undoubtedly with Cambridge and the glory will be Oxford's if they can pull off victory against the greatest weight disparity in Boat Race history.**

The Cambridge crew this year is another in the five-year sequence of winners that is founded on a large pool of long-limbed athletes, many of them trained on the premises but underpinned by some of the best and brightest foreign talent with the savings to pay the fees demanded for a postgraduate degree. This year, the Light Blue colours are borne by the tallest selection ever and the concrete underpinning comes from a German stem pairing of world champions, Marc Weber and Stefan Forster.

Oxford are quite simply not as strong or as distinguished in

past achievement as Cambridge but have, through the leadership of their young president, Andrew Lindsay, and the coaching of Sean Bowden and Renee Mijnders, who led the Dutch to Olympic triumph in Atlanta, produced a crew with a wonderful efficiency of movement and natural rhythm. It is a crew that will have to be close up and in the race at half-way to stand a chance. If they are swept away off the start the chance of recovery is slight, because the Light Blues will relax and recover and use their superior power in bursts to stay ahead.

Searching for a weakness in the Cambridge line-up is a formidable task. The stern pair took a long time to be agreed by the coaches, but now that it is in place it seems the only solution. Forster's great strength and attack are used to transmit an inexorable drive down the boat while Weber is using his greater fluency and understanding of

the Cambridge style to give the crew time on the recovery between strokes. Behind them, Alex Story and Toby Wallace are two younger Brits with abundant natural talent. Story came through the British junior system after starting as a teenager in France before reaching the British national eight for the past three years. Wallace is a 6ft 7in, 15 stone natural who learned to row at Cambridge.

The quality does not drop off in the bows. Graham Smith, at bow, stroked the British Olympic eight in Atlanta and at 14st 7lb is the heaviest bowman ever. In front of him Jonathan Bull and Paul Cunningham are two more home-grown Light Blues blessed with size and strength who blossomed in last year's Goldie boat which was arguably the faster of the two Cambridge winners on the day.

The cox, Alistair Potts, who won the seat only at the last minute from Suzie Ellisan, is an

Olympic cox with 10 years' experience on the Tideway. He surprised both the umpire and the Oxford cox, Alex Greaney, with an eccentric course in Thursday's rehearsal, and a similar line in the race would lose it. But he may have been bluffing.

Oxford have been characterized throughout as a crew to win it in a normal year and on any measure of student rowing in the world are superb. But the 13lb a man weight disadvantage is a lot to make up. Nick Robinson at stroke is smoothly rhythmic and sends a flow right down the boat which allows the heavier guns behind him to let the boat run and do some of the work for them.

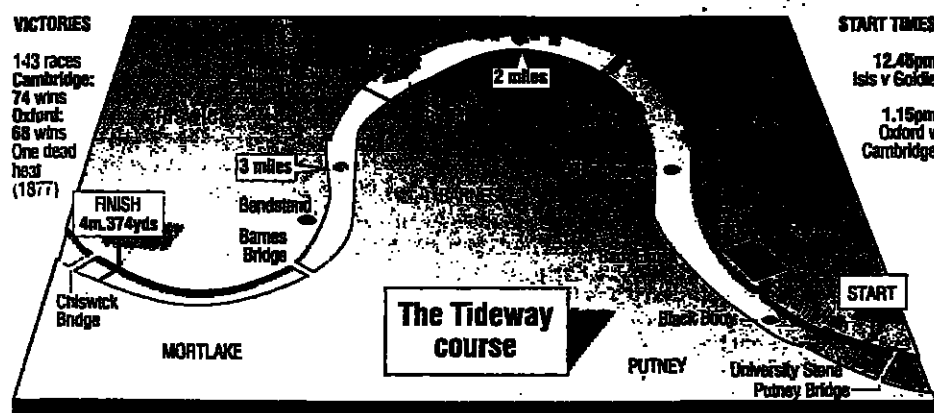
Critical has been the positioning of Paul Berger, a 25-year-old American, at seven. Four square behind Lindsey are Ed Coode, a world bronze medalist in the coxed four last year, Henrik Nilsson and Jürgen Hecht, who, in their late twenties, are tough campaigners with precise knowledge of how to sell themselves dearly over the whole course; and in front of them the tall bow pair are well levered for the fluid style. But while they look more graceful throughout and possibly quicker at the start it may be a dark day for the Dark Blues.





PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
ROBERT HALLAM



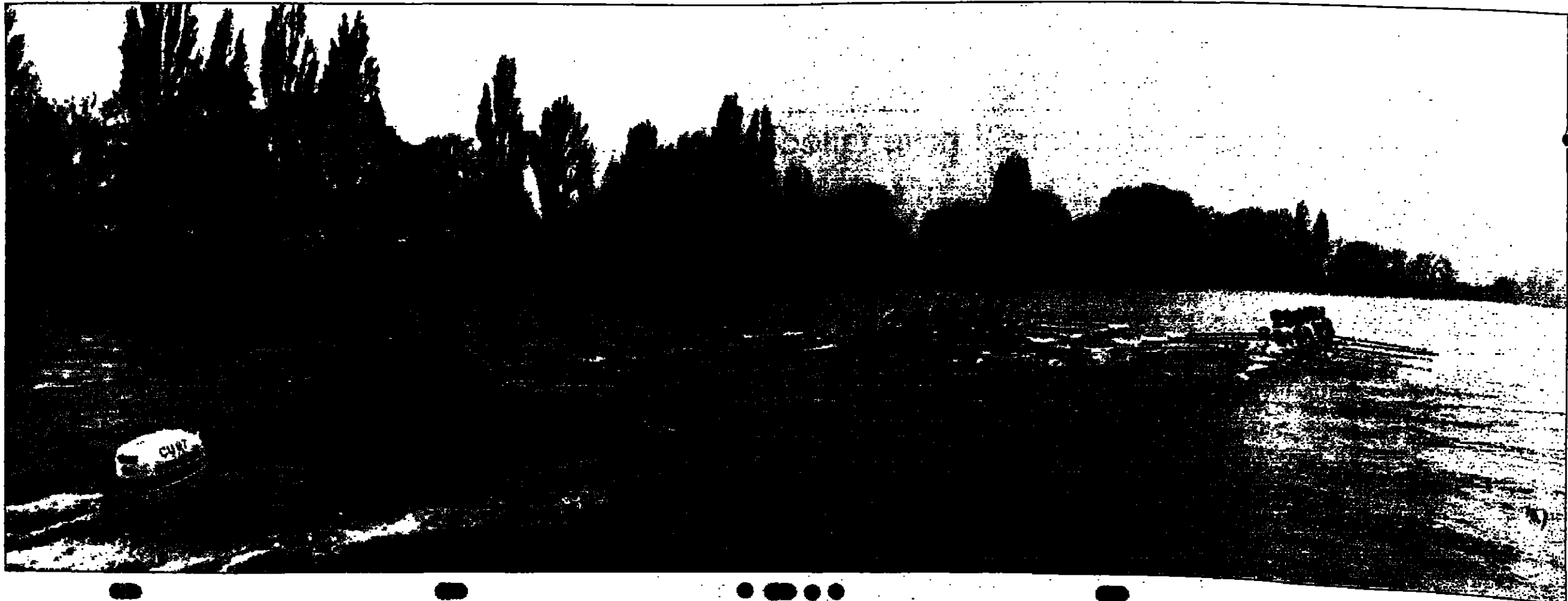
## The 144th Boat Race



Oxford	 <hr/>	Cambridge
<p><b>Bow: G Hambley</b><sup>a</sup> (Hampson &amp; Drail) (3s, age 21) Height 6ft 3in, weight 12st 11lb</p> <p><b>J Heskitt</b> (Goldingen Univ. Cor. &amp; Kabler) GB; 26; 6-7, 14st 11lb</p> <p><b>E Costa</b> (York, Newcastle Univ. &amp; Kabler) GB; 22; 6-4, 14st 6lb</p> <p><b>P Berger</b><sup>a</sup> (University of Pennsylvania, USA &amp; Lincoln) US; 25; 6-4, 14st 5lb</p> <p><b>Doc: A Graham</b><sup>a</sup> (Oxford &amp; St Edmund Hall) <sup>a</sup> GB; 22; 5-11, 16st 8lb</p> <p>Average weight: 14st</p>	 <hr/>	<p><b>Bow: G Smith</b> (Westminster, Univ. Coll. London &amp; St Edmund's) GB; 22; 6-3; 14st 7lb</p> <p><b>J Bull</b> (RSS Newcastle &amp; Emmanuel) GB; 25; 6-5, 16st 1lb</p> <p><b>T Wallace</b> (C Edward VI, Southampton, &amp; Jesus) GB; 21; 6-7; 14st 12lb</p> <p><b>S Fensler</b> (Durham Univ, Germany, &amp; Peterhouse) GB; 26; 6-5; 15st 12lb</p> <p><b>Doc: A Potts</b> (Winchester, Edinburgh Univ. &amp; Trinity Hall) GB; 23; 5-5; 9st 5lb</p> <p>Average weight: 14st 13lb</p>



Tales from the riverbank Oxford (top) coast as a Canada goose skims the surface of the Thames while (above left) the Cambridge finishing coach, Harry Mashon, issues orders during a loud-hailer. Cambridge prove they are not too big for their oversized boots by squeezing into their Wellingtons, an aerial view of the Oxford boat captures the symmetry of the stroke pattern; the Dark Blues display their musical talents on some sponsored instruments; and (bottom) the Cambridge and Goldie crews stride out over the water.





# Montgomerie made to pay for short-iron shortcomings

**Golf**  
By Andy Farrell  
in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

WHEN Bernhard Langer, who had never previously missed the cut in the US Players' Championship, starts with a triple-bogey and has a double three later in an opening 80, you know things are going somewhat awry.

But Langer has not been the only European to suffer at Sawgrass. Colin Montgomerie, who with Langer was expected to contend in the biggest tournament outside the four majors, looked like missing the cut for the first time at Sawgrass since 1992.

Already Ian Woosnam had already been forced to pull out, when he was five over after 12 holes of the first round, with a recurrence of his back problems. Woosie will though try to play in New Orleans next week to prepare for the US Masters.

A nightmare front nine of 41 from Darren Clarke meant he missed the cut at nine over after a 79, while Monty went to the turn in 39 to be five over par.

His feelings were evident from the way the logo on top of his visor was pushed firmly forward as he walked down the fairways. At the fourth, his approach spun back into a tuft of rough by the edge of the water and when he took three to get down the ball was delivered at velocity into the pond.

His three bogeys on the front nine further depressed the Scot, but the damage had been done on Thursday afternoon when he dropped five shots in five holes. Montgomerie has not been putting as well as usual over the last month, but his short iron play was the primary cause of his first round 74.

With only a sand wedge in his hands, Monty left himself in three-putt territory at both the 15th and the first, and duly made bogeys. Later he would miss the green at the sixth with the same club. But his most costly error came at the short 17th, where his nine-iron tee-shot bounced off the green into the water leading to a double-bogey.

"It was very, very poor," Montgomerie admitted. "I have no excuses. The late tee time did not look good but it was fine as the wind had calmed down and I didn't take advantage. I made mistakes from good positions."

While Langer, with no hope of making the cut, attempted to recover some confidence with a front nine of 33, three under par, Jose Maria Olazabal slipped to a 74 to be in danger of not qualifying at two over.

## Waugh leads fightback by Australia

**Cricket**  
India 224 and 99-3; Australia 400

Mark Waugh hit a career-best 153 not out as Australia's batting finally came good on the third day of the third and final Test against India in Bangalore yesterday.

The leg-spinner Anil Kumble ensured India's narrow lead with 6 for 98 while Asharuddin became the 13th player, concluding wicketkeepers, to reach 100 Test catches when he took Robertson in the slips off Kumble.

The Australians, soundly beaten in the first two Tests, responded with their highest total of the series and ended a profitable day by taking three Indian second-innings wickets, including Navjot Singh, who just missed out on his fifth successive half-century in the series.

Waugh, who came in before tea on the second day at 77 for 2, batted for five and a half hours as wicketkeepers tumbled at the other end. He hit 13 boundaries and four sixes in surpassing his previous best of 140 against England at Brisbane during the 1994-95 season.

## Pollock blow for South Africa

Sri Lanka 165-3 v South Africa

AN UNBEATEN 97-run partnership between Arjuna Ranatunga and Roshan Mahanama helped Sri Lanka build a solid position on the first day of the second Test against an injury-hit South Africa at Centurion Park yesterday.

With no play possible after tea because of bad light and rain, Ranatunga was unbeaten on 40 and Mahanama 44 not out at close of play. South Africa, suffered a setback when their all-rounder Shaun Pollock limped off with a groin injury in the third over after lunch. His over had to be completed by fellow fast bowler Makhaya Ntini, who himself was then unable to finish the last over before tea after one delivery, which was a no-ball. Ntini's injury is not known but he will apparently be fit for today's start of play when more should be known too about the extent of Pollock's injury.

Sri Lanka had earlier made a solid start after winning the toss and batting, with openers Sanath Jayasuriya and Marvan Atapattu putting on 53 before the latter was run out. Ntini then took two wickets in six deliveries, having Jayasuriya caught behind for 51 and Aravinda de Silva caught at point for one.

Jayasuriya reached his half-century off 71 balls before Ntini intervened and also accounted for De Silva, putting Sri Lanka on 68 for 3. Mahanama and Ranatunga then batted solidly throughout the afternoon.



Helping hands: A recovery crew removes the Sauber of Britain's Johnny Herbert after he had spun off during practice for the Brazilian Grand Prix yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

## All-conquering Ayr ready to extend reign

**Ice hockey**

ONLY the Cardiff Devils stand between Ayr Scottish Eagles and British ice hockey history at Manchester's Nynex Arena today.

The Eagles are aiming to add the Alamo Play-Off trophy to their Superleague crown. Express and Benson & Hedges

Cups. All-conquering Ayr have brushed aside all before them this season, including Cardiff as they started their silverware sweep with a tight 2-1 victory in the B&H Cup.

That win served little notice of the dominance to come as Eagles comfortably clinched the league title, and then cruised through the play-offs - including two wins over Manchester Storm. Manchester had the opportunity to play in a major final in front of their own fans, but after a 3-3 defeat in Ayr they lost 7-2 at home.

Ayr will be without their long-term casualty Jeff Hoad, while Cardiff have a full squad available, with Mike MacWilliam playing with a damaged hand and Vezio Sacratini on the bench despite a recent groin injury.

## Kournikova and Williams come of age

John Roberts, in Key Biscayne, considers the young talents who contest the women's final of the Lipton Championships today

WHEN Richard Williams held a hand-written card above his head at the start of his 17-year-old daughter Venus's latest win against Martina Hingis, the world No 1, he was suspected of coaching. Unless there is a code to be cracked, the message - "My wife is the best wife in the world" - was simply a compliment to his better half, Oracine.

And why not? For all the criticism levelled against the Williams family for shielding Venus and their younger daughter, Serena, from junior competition, the pair are maturing into perhaps the most exciting sister act tennis has known.

Their performances this week have illuminated the Lipton Championships here alongside another prodigy, the stunning 16-year-old Anna Kournikova, who has caused hearts to flutter, on the court and off it, en route to her first WTA Tour singles final.

Venus Williams versus Anna Kournikova in the title match today is a promoter's dream, the first meeting of the tall, powerful, athletic American with the beaded braids against the lissome, Americanised Russian with the long blonde ponytail.

Apart from adorning the court, both can hit awesome shots and compete with a passion, as we saw when Williams overcame her nerves, which cost three match points, when overpowered Hingis in the semi-finals, 6-2, 5-7, 6-2, and Kournikova left a trail of big-name contenders in her wake - Monica Seles, Conchita Martinez, Lindsay Davenport and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, whom she defeated in the semi-finals, 3-6, 6-1, 6-3.

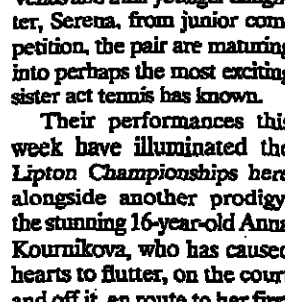
Steffi Graf made the point last summer that Hingis was a shrewd tactician whereas Williams and Kournikova had all the shots but were not certain when to bring them into play. Since then, Kournikova has sought guidance from Graf's former coach, the Czech Pavel Slozil.

"Pavel has helped me a lot mentally," she says. "It's great to have somebody every day with you on the road, talking before the match and after the match. He hasn't really changed my game. Like I said, I could probably do any shots I want. It's just everything in my head. I have to prepare and learn how to win matches."

Four wins in four days against top 10 opponents has raised Kournikova's ranking from No 25 to 20. "I proved to

everybody that I can play good tennis, a lot of matches in a row," she says proudly. "It's definitely the best time of my life right now."

Even after I lost the first set [against Sanchez Vicario], I thought, 'Wow! This is great, I'm playing'. I started to play more aggressively. I started to attack her forehand more. I didn't try to go for winners right away. I kept the ball in three, four, five times, and then I went when I had a good shot to go for. I started to come into the net much more."



Kournikova: 'I'm smarter'



Williams: Overcame nerves

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Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Lifts open	Snow depth	Forecast
<b>ANDORRA</b>						
Val d'Aran	Spring ski conditions	100%	23.3	80	180	Sunny spells
<b>ALBERTA</b>						
Calgary	Top runs laden with fresh snow	100%	23.3	70	180	Sunny intervals
<b>BULGARIA</b>						
Pamporovo	New dry snow	100%	23.3	100	160	Blue skies
<b>CANADA</b>						
Whistler	Plushy firm-packed snow	100%	23.3	200	280	Runways
<b>FRANCE</b>						
Les Deux Alpes	Fresh, groomed snow conditions	85%	24.3	50	280	Sunny periods
<b>ITALY</b>						
Ortles	Snow also has packed powder	100%	22.3	90	140	Sunny periods
<b>NORWAY</b>						
Voss	Good firm-packed snow	90%	14.3	45	80	Bright intervals
<b>ROMANIA</b>						
Poiana Brasov	Packed dry snow at all levels	80%	16.3	55	75	Variable
<b>SPAIN</b>						
Formigal	Spring ski conditions	90%	23.3	20	150	Bright
<b>SWEDEN</b>						
Saeteren	Firm-packed powder snow	100%	9.3	5	25	Cloudy/bright
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>						
St. Moritz	Fresh groomed snow	100%	24.3	65	190	Bright
<b>UNITED STATES</b>						
Steamboat	Spring skiing conditions	50%	19.3	180	225	Partly cloudy/sunny

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline









# Gascoigne's presence lends final fizz

By Glenn Moore  
Football Correspondent

LUCKY old Football League. A few months ago their flagship cup competition seemed destined to follow terracing, lace-up footballs and knickerbocker shorts into the history books. Uefa, the governing body of European football, had taken away the reward of a cup place and leading Premiership teams were fielding near-reserve sides as a result and talking of winding up the competition altogether.

Yet tomorrow, as a result of hard political bargaining by the League's leaders, and sheer good fortune, the Coca-Cola Cup final will attract more attention than for several years.

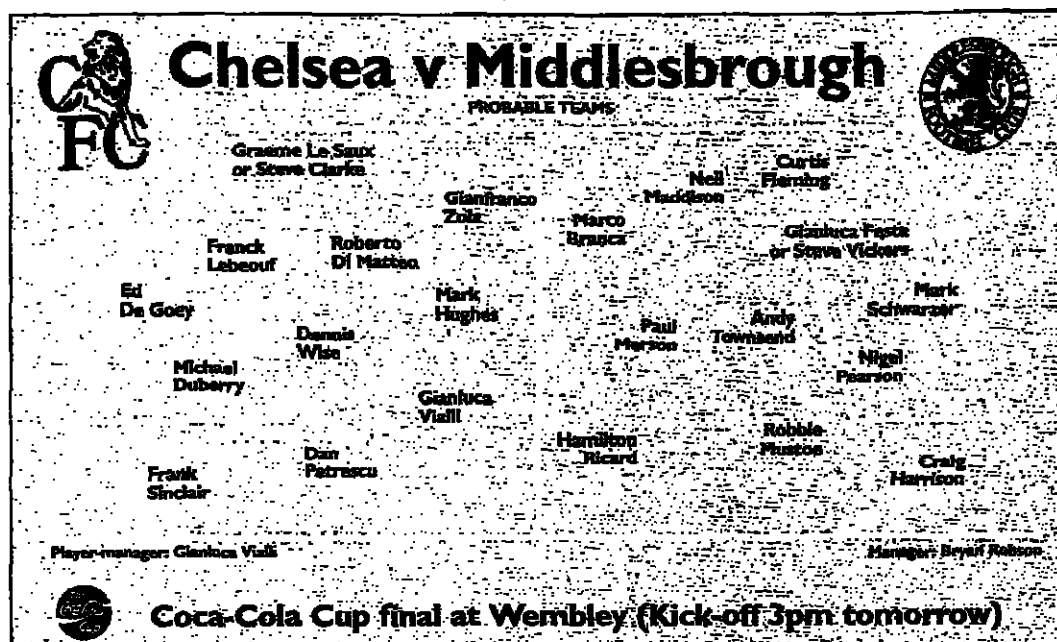
The prime reason is, of course, Paul Gascoigne. Will he play, and will he this time leave Wembley in style rather than on a stretcher? But there are other intriguing questions. Will Gianluca Vialli lift a trophy just one month into management? Or will Middlesbrough, in their third successive final, finally gain their first major honour after 122 years of trying. A European bow also beckons.

Win and Boro get a Uefa Cup place by right. Lose and they can still qualify if Chelsea win the European Cup-Winners' Cup as the Londoners would be defending that next season.

The one thing we can be relatively sure of is that it will be a better match than the FA Cup final between the two sides. Then Chelsea went ahead when Roberto Di Matteo scored after just 43 seconds and their victory, confirmed through a second-half Eddie Newton goal, was far more comfortable than the 2-0 scoreline suggested.

Few would have predicted that the same two teams would not only return for the next Wembley final, but that Bryan Robson would be the surviving manager. His Middlesbrough side may now be in the Nationwide League but they are a far more competitive side than last May when they were low on bodies and confidence.

Though they have lost Juninho, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Emerson, Boro now have a better-balanced squad. Last May Bryan Robson had to play Ravanelli at Wembley though he was not fit but now, even with four



Coca-Cola Cup final at Wembley (Kick-off 3pm tomorrow)

happy to get to Wembley," said Robson, "but this time there is a much different approach. They want to win and believe they can, they are more confident of their own ability."

Gianluca Vialli has a similar selection difficulty to Robson with the added dimension of his own position to be considered. "All I am interested in is seeing Chelsea win the cup," he said, "whether I'm on the bench or involved in the game. I still care about myself as a player but now I am manager and my decision will be entirely about what is best for the team. I will lead the team out but I'm not saying whether I will be in a suit or my football strip."

The latter is more probable as Vialli, who was given a token two minutes by Ruud Gullit in May, is likely to at least be on the bench. One suspects he will play with himself, Zola and either Mark Hughes or Tore Andre Flo in attack though this runs the risk of leaving the midfield light in numbers. An alternative is to play Eddie Newton in midfield to pick up Paul Merson, newly recalled by England and a childhood Chelsea fan. The real

problem area is at the back where Chelsea will inevitably have moments of indecision even if Graeme Le Saux recovers from his ankle injury. If Merson or Gascoigne can take advantage Boro could upstage his better-known compatriots.

Vialli may be fortunate to have replaced Gullit with Chelsea only one month from Wembley but that game, the 3-1 semi-final, second-leg, win over Arsenal at Stamford Bridge, has been their only convincing win in the competition. Of the previous four ties they had drawn two and lost one, twice going through on penalties and once in extra time. They have also had a constantly changing side, in those four matches Gullit used 26 different players.

Boro have won six of their seven ties but form will count for little. As with most games involving Chelsea the result will probably be settled by their own performance. If they play to potential they will win, but if not Boro are very capable of punishing them. The destiny of the 38th Coca-Cola Cup thus hangs on Vialli's nascent tactical and motivational ability.

## Italian hitmen set for Wembley reunion

Marco Branca used to play alongside Vialli, but is planning to ruin his big day. Simon Turnbull on the new Boro hero

MIDDLESBROUGH never has been the best of places for the football sons of Italy. It was at the late Ayresome Park that North Korea inflicted the defeat which sent the World Cup *Azzurri* of 1966 home to a bombardment by tomatoes at Genoa airport. Then, of course, there was *la penna bianca*.

Teesside was tickled at first by the White Feather. Thrice on his debut day against Liverpool at the start of last season Fabrizio Ravanelli performed his trademark goal celebration. But the man from Perugia could not pull the wool – or the synthetic fibres – over the eyes of the Riverside crowd for long.

He might have been rather fond of throwing the arrows on the oche of his local, the King's Head in Hutton Rudby, but it became clear through the course of last season that Ravanelli simply wanted to take his Middlesbrough money and run.

He wrote his name in the club history books with the goal that would have beaten Leicester City in the Coca-Cola Cup final a year ago, had Emile Heskey, "Bruno" to the Filbert Street faithful, not delivered an equalising punchline deep into extra time.

Ravanelli remains the one and only player to have scored a goal for Middlesbrough at Wembley. He is, though, remembered at the Riverside more for the dressing-room unrest he caused as Boro strove in vain to preserve their Premiership status and then returned to the Twin Towers as FA Cup final fodder for Chelsea.

Middlesbrough are back at Wembley tomorrow, to face Chelsea in this season's Coca-Cola Cup final, and once again they have an Italian in their vanguard.

Marco Branca has been a Boro boy for just five weeks, a £1.3m signing from Internazionale. Already, though, he seems more settled on Teesside than his attacking predecessor ever was. Conducting a conference in passable if halting English at Middlesbrough's press day on Thursday afternoon, Branca certainly cut a strikingly different figure to Ravanelli, who never even bothered to grasp the rudiments of the language.

He formed a bright double act with the Italian who has been the most conspicuous success of Bryan Robson's overseas recruitment drive to date. Gianluca Festa, a stable influence in Middlesbrough's defence and in the dressing-



Breaking the mould: After the Ravanelli débacle, Marco Branca has changed the perceptions of Middlesbrough fans about Italian strikers. Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

room, was a team-mate of Branca before his own move from Milan in January last year.

"I think he gives us a hand for winning the cup," Festa said, answering the inevitable question about Paul Gascoigne's arrival. "Speak in English," Robson quipped from the aisle.

The Italians laughed along with the audience and their departing "gaffer". Communication, clearly, is not the problem it once was at Middlesbrough. Robson is running an altogether happier ship down at the Riverside.

"I am here because I want to play in the Premiership," Branca said. "I was determined to come to England. I wanted a new experience, a different atmosphere."

He got that on his debut night at the Riverside, the return leg of the Coca-Cola Cup semi-final against Liverpool. And he responded with the fourth-minute goal, a right-

foot shot through the legs of David James, that booked Middlesbrough's third trip to Wembley in 12 months.

Branca has scored five times in his eight games for Boro, including a bicycle kick against Swindon reminiscent of Dennis Tueart's League Cup final winner for Manchester City in 1976. He has, moreover, looked every bit as graceful as his nickname suggests: *la cigna*, the swan.

"Marco has everything," Festa said. "He is fast. He has good feet. He's good in the air. He's good in the box. He also has good experience."

Branca, 32, was indeed a much travelled player in his homeland. From Grosseto, some 90 miles north of Rome on Italy's Mediterranean coastline, he played for Cagliari, Udinese (in three separate spells), Sampdoria, Fiorentina, Parma and Roma before joining Inter in 1996.

En route, he became close-

ly acquainted with two notable members of the Chelsea set. Branca was Gianluca Vialli's attacking partner in the Sampdoria team that won the *Serie A scudetto* in 1991. He also played alongside Gianfranco Zola at Parma.

"I have kept in contact with them both," he said. "I spoke with Gianluca after the Liverpool semi-final but not before this match. He is very busy in his double job at Chelsea and I am busy in my new job here."

"But he told me it is very prestigious to be playing at Wembley. I believe him. I played there for Inter in the Makita tournament. It is also very prestigious for our fans. It is something very beautiful for them. I will be doing everything to make sure we win."

And that will add a new dimension as Boro bid for their first major trophy: an Italian striker fully committed to the cause.

Gianluca Vialli was a peripheral figure in Chelsea's last cup final. Tomorrow will be different, writes Mike Rowbottom

GIANLUCA VIALLI'S cameo appearance in the last few minutes of the 1997 FA Cup final seemed to come as much by public request as anything else.

Before he left the arena, he made a very obvious point of applauding the fans who had so insistently demanded his appearance. To many it seemed as if the 33-year-old Italian was making his farewells after a season in which, to his patent frustration, he had been rotated in – but mostly out – of the team.

Even Vialli thought it might be goodbye. "I wasn't sure if I would be part of Chelsea the following season, and I wanted to thank the supporters because I had a special..."

Someone supplied the word "rapport" and he nodded.

How curious then, that 10 months later, Vialli should find himself in something akin to a *Groundhog Day*. Tomorrow's Coca-Cola Cup final sees him back in the same place, faced with the same team, and able to make the occasion dramatically better for himself. The question remains – will Chelsea's player-manager give himself the nod?

Mark Hughes, one of four forwards including Vialli who have had to accept the inherent frustrations of Chelsea's squad rotation system, was in no doubt yesterday what action he would take if he were in the same position. "If I was him, I wouldn't leave myself out," Hughes said with a broadening grin. "I'd be the first one on the team sheet!"

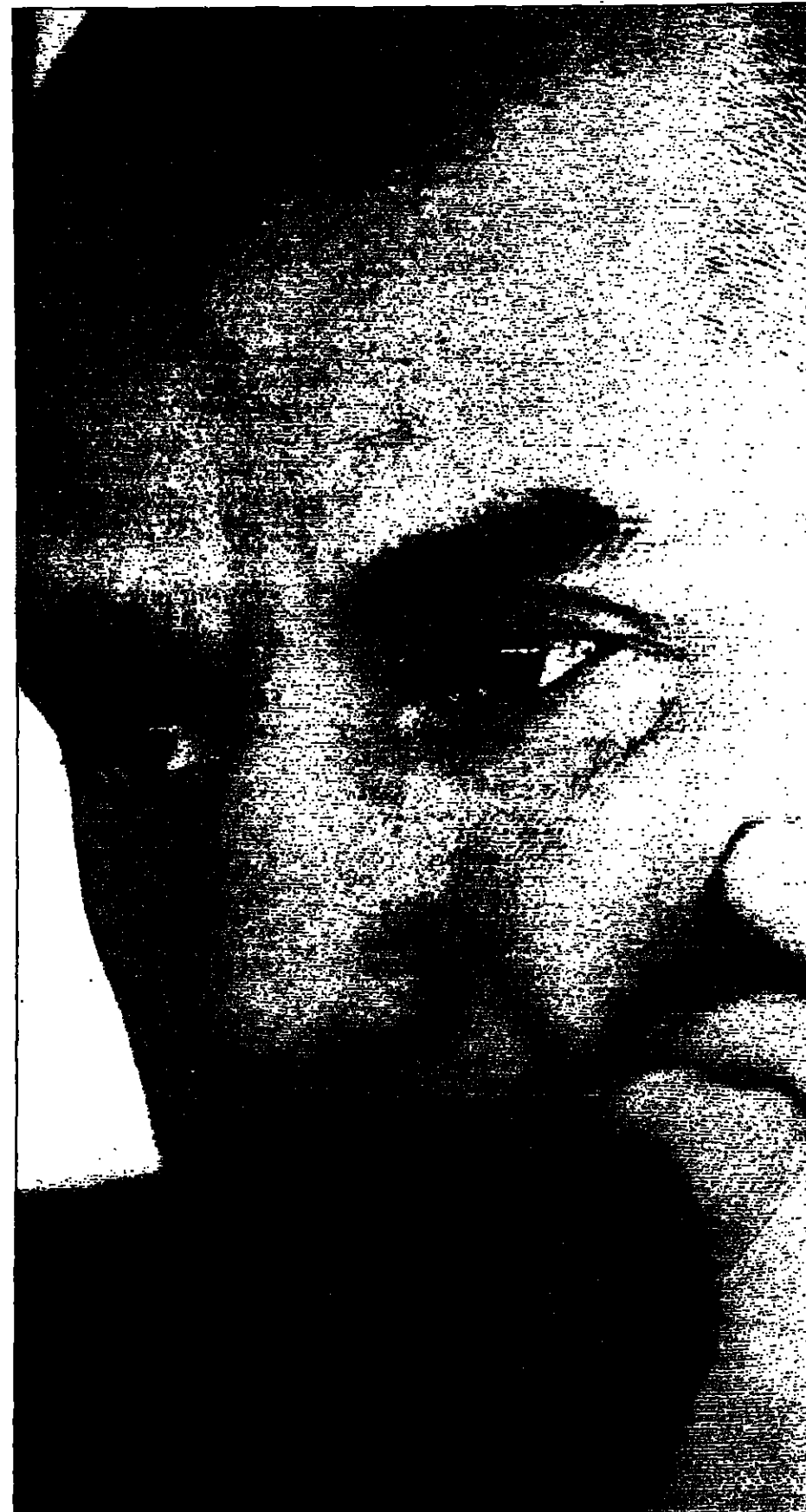
Vialli, however, has wider considerations now. The man who used to amuse himself on the training ground by capturing his farts in cupped hands and releasing them into his team-mates' faces has had to alter his act since taking charge from Ruud Gullit last month.

Asked if he felt he should give himself a Wembley chance, he replied: "No. I have to give Chelsea a chance." Managerial, or what?

"If it means in my opinion that I have to play, I will," he added. "Otherwise I will sit on the bench, because the only thing I care about is Chelsea and not myself as a player. Whatever happens, I will have my game."

For all Chelsea's cup success in his charge – next on their fixture list is Thursday's European Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final at Vicenza – Vialli is not taking anything for granted against a Middlesbrough side which looks eminently capable of returning straight back to the Premiership.

"It won't be easy," he Vialli. "I think we are good enough



Leadership challenge: After playing for just a couple of minutes of last year's FA Cup final, Gianluca Vialli must decide whether to pick himself tomorrow. Photograph: Emrys

to win the game, but Middlesbrough can say the same. It will be a very tight game." Managerial, or what?

The presence in Middlesbrough's side of two fellow Italians, Branca and Festa, is one which Vialli openly acknowledges as a threat. "To be honest, when I play against Italian footballers I am always very aware, because I know that Branca and Festa and players like them can always cope with these important games. They can be decisive, and I would rather not play against them."

He also acknowledged the potential danger of the man who remains an honorary Italian to Lazio supporters. "He is one of those players who, all of a sudden, with a bit of magic, can change the game," Vialli said of Paul Gascoigne, whom he witnessed at first hand while playing for Lazio for Juventus.

"The problem with players like Gascoigne is that you be-

come so afraid of them you forget about playing your own game. This would be dramatic for us. Terrible. So we have to give Gascoigne and Branca special attention, but we have to play like Chelsea usually play."

A large part of that style, Vialli is careful to point out, is down to the work of his predecessor. "I have to be honest enough and recognise that if we are at Wembley it is also because of what Ruud Gullit did at the beginning of the season, because he brought the team up to the semi-final."

The pressure which he has inherited from the Dutchman is something with which Vialli is still coming to terms. "Things are getting better," he said. "If you get used to something the pressure gets lower, so I need time to come down. But now I'm calm and relaxed. I know it's difficult. When we lose I'm the saddest man in the world. But football is just a game, and this is some-

thing we must all remember."

Tomorrow's team is already in Vialli's head, but he will not disclose it to his players until shortly before the kick-off. Tense times then for Chelsea's forward alternates. Tore Andre Flo, has invited 25 relatives and friends from Norway to watch what would be his first Wembley appearance. Gianfranco Zola, newly returned to goalkeeping form, needs to make a good impression in a game that will be televised in Italy to strengthen his claim to a World Cup place.

And Hughes is clearly desperate to play in what would be a 10th and possibly last Wembley cup final of his career.

Who would be a player-manager taking those decisions? Vialli would. "It is something exciting and new," he said. "Something I want to do. It is wonderful thing to think that after 17 years of football playing I am still having such a wonderful feeling. I know that I am very lucky."

delicious



# Quality control that leaves nothing in the reserves

AMONG the many ramifications of Howard Wilkinson's *Charter for Quality*, the long-term aim of which is to re-establish English football as a world force is that the country's 83-year-old reserve leagues are in danger of becoming as dispensable as the big 50p piece.

Under the terms of the Charter, the Avon Insurance Combination (southern teams) and the Pontins League (northern) will be replaced by under-21 leagues (with provision for three over-age players per team) open to the 32 clubs (so far) who have committed to replacing their centres of excellence with new-fangled "academies".

Some argue that the change is long overdue and that we lag behind the Europeans in retaining reserve leagues, anyway. In Spain, for ex-

ample, the top sides nurture nursery as opposed to reserve teams; while in Italy Serie A sides arrange friendships for players returning from injury and frequently "park" young players with Serie B and C sides for experience (which is a practice the major players in Scottish football are considering).

However, to label our reserve leagues merely as poor relations would be to miss their point, since they have been integral to the game over the years. Invaluable as a stage for young players to dress rehearsal for the real thing, and in providing competitive match practice for recuperating stars, they also give managers the chance to run the rule over those on the first-team fringes.

Among those who graced reserve team football last season, for instance,

were the likes of Ian Wright, Rudi Gullit and Ryan Giggs, as well as promising youngsters such as Kieron Dyer (Ipswich), Carl Cort (Wimbledon) and Alex Notman of Manchester United, whose goals helped United retain the Pontins League title by an eight-point margin. Down south the honours went to Wimbledon, who won the Avon Insurance Combination Championship and to Ipswich, who won the Avon Insurance Enterprise Award for their "Family Night Scheme" which attracted huge crowds to reserve games.

Mind you, reserve team football does not always have to rely on incentive schemes. In August 1996, 8,969 people watched Patrick Bergner make his debut in a reserve game between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, while two months later 6,968



OLIVIA BLAIR

saw Andy Cole, making his Manchester United comeback in a reserve match, break his leg in a tackle with Neil Ruddock. Both crowds, however, pale into insignificance compared to the 22,600 who saw Duncan Ferguson get out of goal for a 1995 Old Firm reserve clash.

Rangers have been criticised recently for investing in expensive, mediocre foreigners instead of in youth, but at least they have preserved their reserves. Newcastle infamously disbanded theirs altogether under Kevin Keegan (Kenyon Dalglish has since reinstated them) which has meant a glut of toothless foreigners at St James' Park instead of young talent like Darren Huckerby, who was released because Newcastle could offer him no competitive football.

Ironically, that is the key to the concept of the academies according to one of their major proponents. The Charlton first-team coach, Les Reed, who claims the academies are "the best thing to happen to English football in years", says the emphasis will now be on development

rather than competition; specifically, on coaching rather than on playing.

In other words, those players not involved with the first team or the under-21 leagues will be coached, the academies granting them a statutory number of hours coaching per week instead of subjecting them to countless draining reserve-team fixtures.

So it looks like the end of the road for reserve-team football in its present guise, even if this week's agreement to defer the process of change until next season gives it a year's grace. Still, the reserve leagues are offering a spirited resistance, albeit one which has a rather doomed air. In fact the Combination secretary, Neville Chamberlain, claims they will "carry on regardless" in the face of what he describes as the "restrictive measures being placed on

up-and-coming professionals by the powers that be, who think they have the God-given right to wield a big stick whenever they see fit".

Chamberlain has received applications from six clubs wanting to replace those who will be opting out, but as they are the likes of Reading, Gillingham and Bournemouth, it is obvious that the reserve leagues will be considerably weakened.

The Combination will certainly be without Charlton who, having beaten the leaders, Arsenal, this week in front of 7,500 to establish a club record of 18 reserve games unbeaten (and go 1,039 minutes without conceding a goal), now have 58 points to Arsenal's 59 with five games in hand. They haven't won the Combination since 1950, so are looking to go out with a bang.

## Today's Premiership team news

**Arsenal v Sheff Wed**  
Birmingham 19  
Leading scorer: Di Canio 8  
Last season: 4-1

Arsenal will be without key midfielder Emmanuel Petit for today's match. The Frenchman has a badly bruised leg after France's 1-0 defeat in Russia on Wednesday. David Seaman should return to replace Alex Manninger in goal after a 13-game absence with a broken finger. Tony Adams and Ray Parlour are available after they pulled out of England's friendly against Switzerland in Bern. Steve Bould is fit again following a hand injury but is not included in Arsène Wenger's squad. Ian Wright's comeback will not be before next week, when Dennis Bergkamp will start a three-match ban.

Sheffield Wednesday's 1.7m Macedonian international centre-back Gocce Sedloski is likely to make his full Premiership debut in place of the injured Jon Newsome. Sedloski came on for Newsome during the 3-2 defeat at Bolton a fortnight ago. Graham Hyde is in contention for a midfield place after serving a two-match ban, with Norwegian international Petter Rudi suffering from a hamstring problem. There is a place in the squad for the former Benfica defender Emerson Thorne, who was signed on a free transfer last week.

**Barnsley v Liverpool**  
Rotherham 11  
Leading scorer: Owen 19  
Last season: No fixture

Ashley Ward, who scored the only goal when Barnsley beat Liverpool 1-0 at Anfield in November, is out with a hamstring problem, while John Hendrie (ankle) is also unavailable. Ian-Aage Fjortoft and Georgi Hristov are most likely to start up front. Andy Liddell is doubtful after breaking his nose in the 4-3 win over Southampton a fortnight ago. Alex Krizan (knee) and Peter Markstedt (neck) are also out of contention, and centre back Adie Moses is suspended, so Matty Appleby, Scott Jones and Arjan de Zeeuw come into contention. Barnsley have won their last three Premiership games. Karlheinz Riedle and Phil Babb are both back in the Liverpool squad after injury and could make their Premiership returns today. Babb's return could see manager Roy Evans reverting to a five-man back line while Riedle could partner Michael Owen up front. Evans, however, may decide to leave the teenage England player as a lone striker as he did at Tottenham a fortnight ago, with support from Steve McManis running from midfield. Liverpool have only won one of their last eight Premiership games.

**Bolton v Leicester**  
Barnsley 12  
Leading scorer: Marshall 8  
Last season: No fixture

Colin Todd's squad has been strengthened by three transfer deadline signings. Bob Taylor, John Salako and Swiss forward Gaetano Gallarza are all likely to be involved in the game today. Top scorer Nathan Blake is suspended, so either Taylor or Gallarza will be chosen to partner Dean Holdsworth in attack. Garry Taggart remains out with a long-standing groin problem and midfielder Scott Sellers (calf) is still in the fit. The departures of Jamie Pollock to Manchester City and Peter Beardsley to Fulham leave gaps in the midfield, where Salako is likely to make a debut as a winger. Bolton won 3-2 against Sheffield Wednesday a fortnight ago, their first Premiership win since December, to give their relegation fight some impetus.

Leicester welcome back Scottish international Matt Elliott after a leg injury. Tony Cottie, Garry Parker and Pontus Karmark all come into contention after injury but Muzzy Izzet is still suspended. Captain Steve Walsh returned to training yesterday after an Achilles injury but is unlikely to be risked. Leicester have lost their last two Premiership matches.

**Coventry v Derby**  
Barnsley 13  
Leading scorer: Wainwright 15  
Last season: 1-2

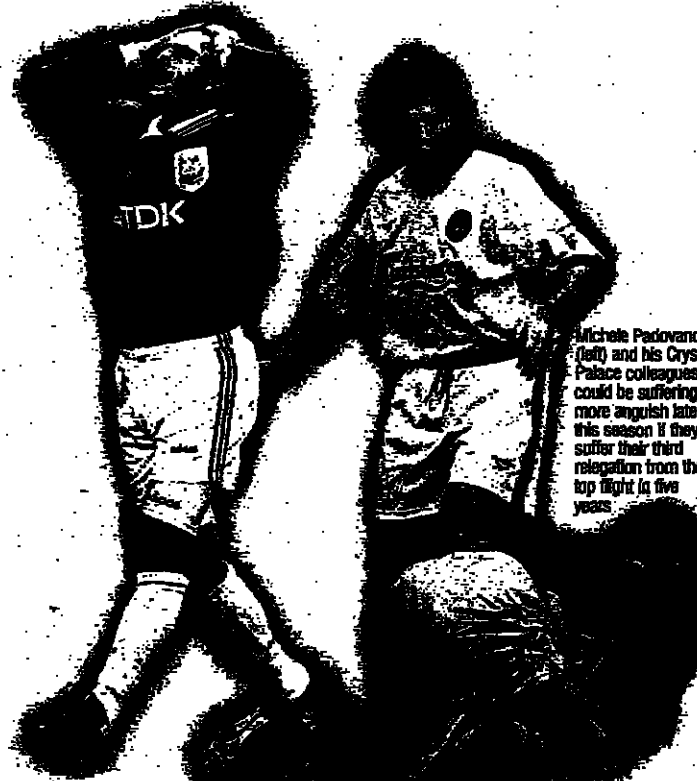
Coventry will continue to start with their veteran goalkeeper Steve Petrovic as they look to extend their unbeaten run to 12 matches. The 40-year-old lost his place to Magnus Hedman in January, but regained it when the 25-year-old Swede damaged an ankle in training. Hedman returned from international duty this week but must wait to reclaim his place in starting line-up. Coventry set a new club record for six consecutive League wins before drawing 0-0 at Newcastle a fortnight ago and will be hoping to beat Derby as they try to maintain their late challenge for a place in Europe next season. Derby are almost certain to be without goalkeeper Mart Poom (shoulder) and Russell Hoult will take over. Stefano Eranio (hamstring) is unavailable and Dean Sturridge completes a two-match ban. Lars Bohinen, signed from Blackburn this week, will make his debut. Robin van der Laan returns to the squad for the first time since he damaged an ankle against Manchester United in October. Jim Smith's side will be hoping to recover from the 5-0 home thrashing against Leeds a fortnight ago to maintain their own European challenge.

**PREMIERSHIP LEADING SCORERS**

	Lg	FA	CC	Euro	Tot
1 Cole (Man Utd)	12	5	0	5	22
2 Harrison (W Ham)	12	3	6	0	21
3 Sutton (Blackburn)	16	2	1	0	19
Dublin (Coventry)	14	4	1	0	19
Owen (Liverpool)	14	0	4	1	19
8 Bergkamp (Arsenal)	12	3	2	1	18
7 Gallacher (Bkbn)	13	3	1	0	17
Vaill (Chelsea)	9	2	0	6	17
9 Forbitt (Barnsley)	13	2	1	0	16
(12 for Sheffield Utd)	10	4	2	0	16
Hessebark (Leeds)	10	0	4	0	15
Wainwright (Derby)	11	0	4	0	15
12 Jensen (C Palace)	11	0	3	0	14
(12 for Charlton)	10	0	2	0	13
Di Canio (Sheff W)	11	0	2	0	13
Wallace (Leeds)	10	1	2	0	13
10 (Chelsea)	9	0	2	2	13

## ...And statistics

### Regular riders on football's roller-coaster



### The yo-yo clubs

Six promotions or relegations in the last 10 years

Middlesbrough

Four promotions or relegations in the last 10 years

Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, Crewe, Grimsby, Notts County, Peterborough, Southend, Swindon, Watford

### Top of the tree

Premiership clubs which have stayed in the top flight for 10 years or more

Club	Since
Arsenal	1919
Everton	1954
Liverpool	1962
Coventry	1967
Man Utd	1975
Southampton	1978
Sheff Wed	1978
Wimbledon	1986
Blackburn	1988

**Partnerships**

Club	First Division/old Second Division	Since
Partnerships	First Division/old Second Division	Since 1988
Scunthorpe	Third Division/old Fourth Division	Since 1984
Doncaster	Third Division/old Fourth Division	Since 1988
Scarbrough	Third Division/old Fourth Division	Since 1987
Lincoln	Third Division/old Fourth Division	Since 1988

Their rivals would not doubt regard it as final confirmation that Arsenal are boring: in 105 years since joining the Football League the Gunners have changed divisions only three times. Indeed, the north London club have not been out of the top flight since winning election to the First Division in 1919.

What a contrast with Middlesbrough, who have experienced three promotions and three relegations in the last 10 years and look set to bounce back into the Premiership this summer after dropping out last year. And whose place might Middlesbrough take in the Premiership?

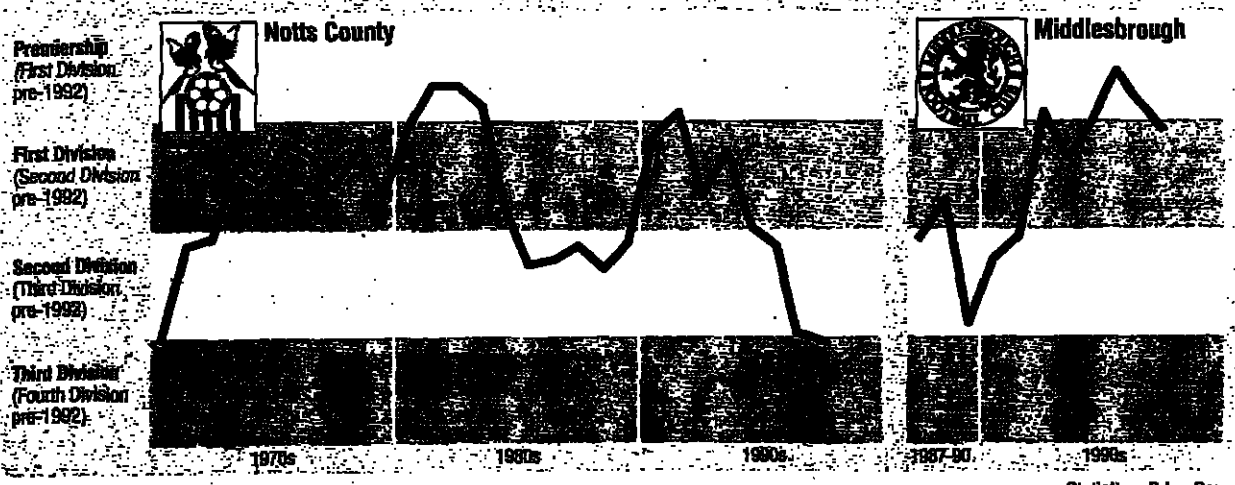
It should be no surprise that two of the relegation positions are currently filled by Crystal Palace and Bolton, who have gone up or down five times in the last 10 years. Having been relegated in both 1993 and 1995, Palace are heading for the drop for the third time in five years.

Notts County are another club who have regularly been on the move and today they find themselves exactly where they were 27 years ago, at the top of the basement division. Victory over Leyton Orient at Meadow Lane today will ensure promotion from the Third Division and County will be hoping that, as on the last occasion, this will be the first step up football's ladder to the top.

While nine Premiership clubs have been in the top flight for the last 10 seasons or more, only six Nationwide League clubs have retained their status over the same period.

And if anyone suggests that Arsenal are boring, how about Rochdale? The Lancashire club have spent 24 years languishing in the Football League basement and have won promotion only once (in 1969) in their 77 years in the League.

## On the move: the rise and fall of two clubs who never stand still



## FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

	R	Pts	Home					Away					Form (last match on 1998)	Upcoming matches	
			GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F			A
2 Arsenal	28	54	+21	10	2	2	29	9	5	7	2	18	17	WWDWW	28 Apr Blackburn (H), 29 Apr Newcastle (H), 30 Apr Newcastle (A), 1 May Arsenal (H), 2 May Tottenham (H), 3 May Liverpool (A), 4 May Everton (H), 5 May Blackburn (A), 6 May Wimbledon (H), 7 May Bolton (A), 8 May Notts County (H), 9 May Derby (A), 10 May Southampton (H), 11 May Crystal Palace (A), 12 May Sheffield Wed (H), 13 May Barnsley (A), 14 May Charlton (H), 15 May Ipswich (A), 16 May Reading (H), 17 May Leicester (A), 18 May Fulham (H), 19 May Manchester City (A), 20 May Aston Villa (H), 21 May West Ham (A), 22 May Middlesbrough (H), 23 May Norwich (A), 24 May Bournemouth (H), 25 May Watford (A), 26 May Millwall (H), 27 May Luton (A), 28 May Sheff Utd (H), 29 May QPR (A), 30 May Blackpool (H), 31 May Burnley (A), 1 Jun Nottm Forest (H), 2 Jun Cardiff (A), 3 Jun Hull City (H), 4 Jun Preston (A), 5 Jun Blackpool (H), 6 Jun Barnsley (A), 7 Jun Nottm Forest (H), 8 Jun Cardiff (A), 9 Jun Hull City (H), 10 Jun Preston (A), 11 Jun 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# SPORT

Saturday 28 March 1998

## Mettle detectors head for Highbury

### Football

By Guy Hodgson

A STRAW that Alex Ferguson was able to claw from Manchester United's defeat against Arsenal a fortnight ago was that his opponents will no longer be able to hide under a cloak of anonymity. The heavy burden of anticipation will now be on Arsène Wenger's team.

Today is the first occasion the Gunners will emerge from the tunnel with genuine championship aspirations and winning now will be an altogether different thing. An anxiety to do well will colour every thought.

"I looked in people's faces

and saw fear in their eyes," Tony Parkes, the Blackburn assistant manager, said recalling his side's run-in to the title three years ago. "At that point it has nothing to do with ability."

Arsenal's mettle detection begins with Sheffield Wednesday at Highbury today which will be the first of a minimum 11 games in six weeks. "We can't try any harder," Lee Dixon said, "but we relish hard work and we don't want that to be wasted by throwing away silly games."

Wednesday, who are 13th and have won only twice away this season, can safely be ascribed to the "silly" category but after that there are few fixtures that even approach the

mildly amusing. Arsenal face Bolton, Blackburn, Barnsley, Liverpool and Aston Villa on their travels while, at Highbury, Newcastle, Wimbledon, Derby and Everton are fixtures where points could easily be dropped.

Having a three-game advantage over Manchester United is all very well if you can wipe out the six-point arrears between the teams. That is easier said than done. "United have slipped up but I can't see them slipping up many more times," said Michael Hughes, who will get a close-up examination of the champions' form with Wimbledon at Old Trafford today. "If I were a betting man I'd go with United."

"Arsenal have gone on a great run but I thought the result they got against us was lucky. It's in their hands but I can't see them winning the eight or nine matches they'll need. If they do then they'll deserve to win the League."

What will be decisive is the number of first-choice players Wenger and Ferguson will be able to field for the climax and, on that count, both had reasons to be cheerful yesterday. Although Emmanuel Petit is out with a leg injury incurred playing for France in Russia, Arsenal could have Tony Adams and Ray Parlour fit as compensation. United, meanwhile, may welcome back Ryan Giggs and Peter

Schmeichel against Wimbledon. Even Teddy Sheringham's one-match suspension is offset by Ole Gunnar Solskjær's acceleration towards his best form. The Norwegian scored for his country against Belgium in midweek and also got the goal in the 1-1 draw with Monaco 10 days ago.

"They're bound to be on a bit of a downer after going out of the European Cup," Hughes said, "but on the flip side they now know they've just got the League to go for."

That has been the case for Liverpool for some time now and their fixture at Old Trafford will have a big influence on whether their Premiership's finale is exciting or a chore. They have

won only one of their last eight League games but a slip-up by the top two and suddenly their Champions' League qualification will look less remote.

That presupposes they beat Barnsley which they dismissively failed to do at Anfield in November for what is still the shock of the Premiership this season. The home side, too, are riding on an unprecedented crest of three successive wins.

Their players have the advantage of not having travelled the length and breadth of Europe in international friendlies, which is fortunate because they were close to exhaustion after beating Southampton 4-3 a fortnight ago. They have spent

the intervening time sunning themselves in Majorca.

"The players were jaded at that point," the Barnsley manager, Danny Wilson, said. "Hopefully the break will have proved beneficial and revitalised them ready for what is going to be a tough last few weeks."

Four other matches today will also help to clarify or muddy the relegation waters. Bolton have the opportunity to build on their win over Sheffield Wednesday at home to Leicester, Everton and Aston Villa will attempt to be big clubs in deed as well as reputation at Goodison while Newcastle will be hoping to be worthy of their overpriced shirts away to Southampton.

The game that has six-pointer running through the centre of it, however, is at Selhurst Park where Crystal Palace probably have to beat Tottenham to have any prospect of staying the Premiership. Lose and they will be eight points behind Spurs, who will be without the suspended David Ginola; win and the gap will be down to two.

Arturo Lombardo's appointment as manager has coincided with a sudden surge of fitness. The Italian is available himself while Michele Padovano, Neil Shipperley and Paul Warhurst are either recovered or nearly so. Add £1m signing Sasa Curcic and suddenly Palace do not look quite so hapless.

## Protests cannot dent McLarens' superiority

### Motor racing

By David Tremayne  
in São Paulo

It took Mika Hakkinen only three laps yesterday morning to underscore Ron Dennis's contention that the controversial brake bias system used on his McLaren cars is but a part of their present performance advantage.

Though they were forced to run without the system, following protests which had again thrown the sport into further confusion on Thursday night, Hakkinen and David Coulthard dominated the first session of free practice with an insouciant ease that left the rest trailing more than a second and a half behind.

Ferrari carried out their threat to protest about McLaren's brake system which allows their drivers to apply different retardation pressure to either rear wheel in corners, enhancing cornering efficiency and grip. The key issue is whether this contravenes regulations which prescribe four-wheel steering.

Jean Todt, Ferrari's sporting director, had expressed his concern over the system in Melbourne three weeks ago, during the Australian Grand Prix which McLaren dominated. With Tyrrell he lodged an official protest against McLaren as

well as the Williams and Jordan teams which have similar systems. At the same time Arrows protested against McLaren and Williams, and Sauber and Minardi protested against Jordan.

Todt reiterated his misgivings yesterday: "We think the McLaren system has a four-wheel steering function. We want to clarify what is legal according to the technical regulations and what is not."

This is seen not so much as a protest primarily against McLaren, though there are already bad feelings between the team following Ron Dennis' thinly veiled attack on the Italian team in Australia, but against the world governing body FIA and the manner in which it determines the legality of ideas presented by individual teams.

Yesterday Dennis continued to defend his system, although it had been removed on the advice of the FIA pending a meeting between the teams and the FIA stewards later yesterday evening. "Throughout the winter we have been in constant dialogue with the FIA regarding our technical ideas, and we are confident that everything we have incorporated on our new car is fully legal."

"The protest is time-consuming and a bit annoying, but clearly Ferrari is not satisfied with the interpretation of the

rules and there is a process by which they can challenge that process. I find it strange that they would want to do that, since we have complied with the system in question via endless communication."

"We will pursue the matter to the Court of Appeal if necessary. The rule book is two inches thick and we face fresh constraints every year. So if we find something within them that gives us an advantage, who on earth should anyone be surprised that we don't want to divulge any details on how it works to anybody else?"

"Those teams who want to know will find out if they challenge the system, but I do not believe that the FIA thinks the Court of Appeal is the best system by which to establish the legality of a car. The system for that already exists, and we followed it to the letter."

Ferrari, for one, clearly do not share that view. When practice resumed yesterday Coulthard and Hakkinen traded places but retained their comfortable supremacy.

It remains to be seen whether the McLarens were grandstanding in outright qualifying set-up to prove a point, but few doubt their superiority will continue in official qualifying today.



England's Graeme Hick is bowled for five by Merv Dillon of the Vice Chancellor's XI at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown yesterday

Photograph: PA

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3570, Saturday 28 March

By Mass

### ACROSS

- Courage shown by copper, we hear? (6)
- Drill, core or fabric? (6)
- Rank settles with a fruit in, rotting (5,10)
- A holiday to forget (5)
- What a brutish exhibition! (9)
- Cruel Southern driver (6)
- Texts establishing the Northern deity right away (6)
- Book for circle after measure of drink (6)
- Falls apart. I see, in depressions (6)
- A chappie, given stretch, appealed (9)
- Plant's almost divided (5)
- Prescriptions for tablets (3,12)
- Weather is penetrating lounge (6)
- Music-maker's de-canted trendy wine (6)

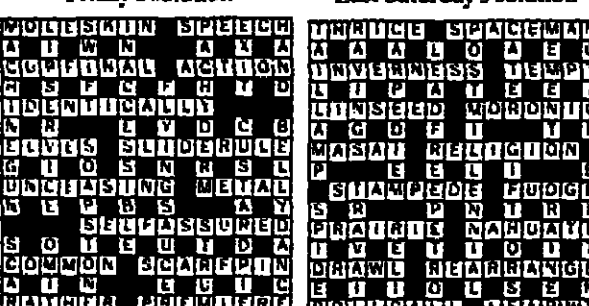
### DOWN

- Suppress blunder before French article appears (6)
- Set up routine title, one amongst data for book producers (4,11)
- Resilient bright male (5)
- Pine for revenge, making moves to capture Queen? (9)
- It went west some time ago (7,8)
- Pretty creature, that girl (6)
- In time sect causes anxiety (6)
- Boat round NE, fruit carrier (6)
- Cruel wickcrack to provoke and cut (9)
- Punctual trains into Maine (2,4)
- Formal stylist's puff about edition (6)
- One's life with gold is divine (6)
- Walks, say, with outwards drunken list (4,2)
- Brown artist's squeezed out for animal (5)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle appear next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to: Sunday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5SL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: G Smith, Reading; J Jolly, Metheringham; M Hicks, London NW2; M Wallace, Fife; M Dickson, Middlesbrough.

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



## Stewart run spree ends in controversy after umpire fails to spot Rose no-ball

### Cricket

By Mark Baldwin  
in Barbados

ALEC STEWART'S 108 ended in controversial circumstances here yesterday as England totalled 289 for 7 in their one-day warm-up match against a Vice Chancellor's XI.

Stewart, who put on 157 in 26 overs with England's one-day captain, Adam Holoake, to revive England's innings, was bowled taking a huge swipe at Franklyn Rose because he thought it would be signalled a no-ball by the umpire Halley Moore.

But Moore ignored Stewart's appeal that only three fielders were inside the 30-yard fielding ring - a minimum of four is required in 50-over cricket - and the England coach, David Lloyd, had a word with the officials to try to clarify the situation. England's management later said that they had accepted the umpire's decision.

Stewart, who had repeatedly assured to the umpires after being given out, walked off shaking his head in disgust. The wicketkeeper, who was England's top scorer in the recent Test series against the West Indies, hit 14 fours in a

responsible but fluent 128-ball innings. Holoake had immediately reinspired himself as England's leader in the shortened game with a 78-ball 76 that included a six out of the ground off Merv Dillon that took him to his half-century.

The Surrey pair ensured a sizeable England total, after an initial slide to 59 for 3, and in the final overs Dougie Brown and Robert Croft laid about the bowling to add 33 more runs.

Not even the sore back of Graham Thorpe meant Mike Atherton could find a place in the side that was so successful when they won the Sharjah Trophy in December.

Angus Fraser took the place of the left-hander and with Ben Holoake in for the absent Alastair Brown it meant nine of

the victorious side were playing. With their policy of packing the side with all-rounders it also meant that two players who have opened for their counties in one-day cricket - Matthew Fleming and Croft - came in at 46 and 42 respectively.

By the time Ben Holoake joined Stewart in the third over, England were already 26 for 1 after being put into bat.

The younger Holoake brother, fresher from a superb tour with bat in Sri Lanka, promised much with a couple of sumptuous strokes, but on nine he tried to whip Mpsang off his pads and was held backward of square.

Hick, one of six players to arrive for the one-day leg of the tour that comprises of five games against the West Indies - the first of which is here tomorrow - had made just five when he was bowled off an inside edge driving at Dillon.

Vice Chancellor's XI won last ENGLAND: N V Knight & Dillon b Rose 44; A J Stewart b Rose 108; B C Holoake c Tuckett b Mpsang 50; S A Hirst b Dillon 40; M Fleming c Holoake b Rose 76; M A Atherton c Tuckett b Sarwar 15; D B Brown not out 6; M V Fleming b Tuckett 10; R D Croft not out 18; Extras (bats, wk, nb) 20; Total (for 7, 48 overs) 289; Fall: 1-28, 2-48, 3-89, 4-205, 5-259, 6-294.

Did not bat: D W Headley, A R G Fraser. Bowling: Rose 10-0-45-3; Mpsang 8-1-51-1; Dillon 7-0-51-1; DeSilva 6-0-33-0; Tuckett 6-0-47-0; Sarwar 10-0-78-4.

VICE CHANCELLOR'S XI: O G Greenwood, D L Haynes, B C Lane, S Joseph, P J L Dillon, M S Mouslim, C Tuckett, P A J DeSilva, M V Dillon, F A Rose, V Mpsang, Umphress, H More and M Jones.

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PERSONAL FINANCE JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

## A poor excuse for financial services

I am becoming rather worried at how little it takes for me to be thrown into fits of apoplexy. It could all be to do with encroaching old age, I suppose. Except that my anger mostly manifests itself when I am forced to listen to the financial services industry's excuses.

My most recent fit followed the publication of a document by the Consumers' Association (CA) earlier this week into "disclosure". This is the term used to describe the supply of financial information, such as charges and commissions, which policyholders need to know before they buy a particular product.

The CA report, written about in more detail elsewhere in this section, argues that the existing disclosure regime has failed to help consumers.

The information we are provided with, and the way we are given it, conspires to make it no easier for us to really understand what product providers are doing with our money. In fact, mistrust of the entire financial services process is so rife, the CA found, that we tend not to read the product particulars even when it is relatively well presented.

The CA concludes that some form of rating system where benchmark figures are used to compare and rate products would simplify matters considerably. Minimum product standards, such as maximum charges, flexibility and so on, are another idea put forward in the report.

All this is something *The Independent* has been campaigning for ever since we began publishing analyses of the life and pensions industry by John Chapman, who de-

vised one such scheme several years ago (John's latest survey appears this week).

The CA's findings are so sensible that one would imagine financial regulators falling over themselves to support them. But no, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) - the front-line watchdog responsible for protecting consumers - can't quite bring itself to do that. The PIA is reported in one publication as simply "noting" the Consumers' Association's views.

Wow. Each year, hundreds of thousands of policyholders are unable to understand the information they are given and buy inappropriate and expensive products. Meanwhile the PIA, whose inadequate disclosure rules have led to this position, "notes" attempts to suggest better alternatives.

Perhaps its reactions come from the same stable as those of a financial adviser who this week blamed the CA itself for consumers' ignorance.

According to him, the public feels ignorant not because it is given the wrong information badly, but because it is given any information at all. If we weren't told anything, we would have nothing to be worried about. Ignorance is bliss, in other words.

One can only hope the CA's report finds its way into the hands of people marginally more sympathetic to the concept of consumers as intelligent and rational human beings. Meanwhile, the financial services industry might reflect on the fact that had punters been better informed and had the products sold been of a high standard, it would not be facing an £11bn bill to compensate victims of the pension mis-selling scandal.

# Budget for future investments

THE MAKEOVER  
Name: Ryan Williams  
Age: 49  
Occupation: Engineer

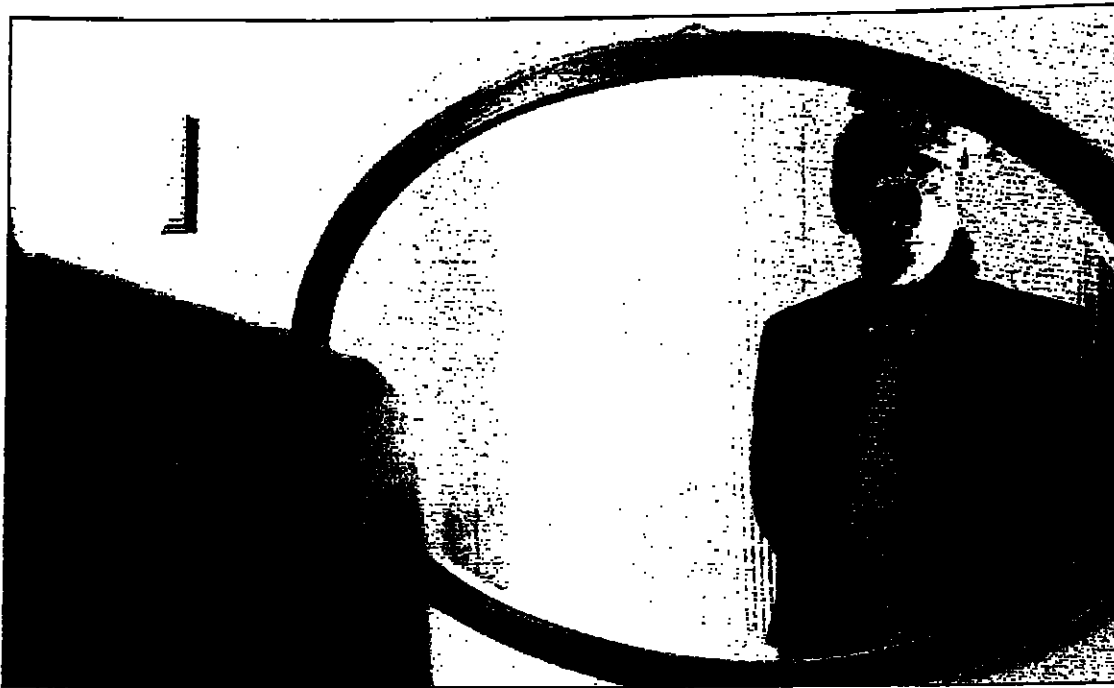
The problem: What to do with cash "slopping around" in a PEP which he does not know what to do with. He is concerned that the UK stock market may be over-valued at present. The advice: Look to corporate bond PEPs as an alternative way of using your tax-free allowances with the possibility of some capital gains but without the same risk as with equities.

Ryan Williams is 49 and married with two children, both of whom have flown the nest. He and his wife are members of their employers' pension schemes. Their home is paid for and valued at around £150,000. He has some cash on deposit with a building society. Their major investments are in self-select PEPs worth around £65,000, of which around £40,000 is currently held in cash. In addition, they hold around £10,000 of equities and Mrs Williams contributes the maximum to an employee share option plan (Esop). Both have Tesco's.

Ryan is concerned about the impact of the Budget on his financial planning, and is looking for suggestions regarding future investment strategy, with the main priority being capital growth. He earns £25,000 a year and has a company car. Mrs Williams earns £10,000.

The adviser: Bruce Clark, of the independent financial advice firm Fraser Smith, Maple House, High Street, Pottery Bar, Herts, EN6 5BS, 01707 672900 (the firm also has a London office).

The advice: Ryan and his wife are in a reasonably strong financial position, having paid off their mortgage. He has been a member of his final salary company pension scheme since he started work over 30 years ago and has regularly topped up his contribution each year to the maximum 15 per cent of salary allowed, via a free-stand-



Market worries: Corporate bonds could be safer investments for Ryan Williams. Photograph: John Lawrence

ing additional voluntary contribution (FSAVC). He pays pension contributions net of 23 per cent basic rate income tax, which is claimed at source.

He should continue to fund at the maximum level to the FSAVC to take advantage of the tax relief while they last.

There is a word of caution, however. Ryan may be close to earning the maximum two-thirds pension and should check each year that his additional contributions won't result in an over-funding problem. Since it is possible to include all taxable emoluments, this rarely causes a problem. Pension schemes tend to provide benefits linked to basic salary only and so exclude bonuses and other benefits in kind, such as the company car.

To get a full picture of income in retirement, a forecast of the potential benefits available to both Ryan and his wife should be obtained, as well as a forecast of state benefits, which can be

obtained by completing DSS form BR19. A cashflow management exercise can then be undertaken which will identify the income set to be generated from all sources during retirement.

The couple both have Tesco's. The announcement that existing Tesco's will be able to continue their five-year life span is to be welcomed. It makes sense to maximise Tesco's contributions to enjoy the tax-free benefits of this investment. Contributions to Tesco's can continue for their normal five-year life, and the capital value can then be rolled over to an Individual Savings Account (ISA) without impacting upon the normal annual allowance.

The future of PEPs was also clarified, with the £50,000 limit for transfer to the new ISA scrapped after sustained industry lobbying. This is good news for Ryan with PEP holdings of £64,000 and 1998/9 PEP allowances still to use. Mrs Williams has still to use her

1997/8 PEP allowance and has been considering a corporate bond PEP.

A corporate bond is similar to a gilt issued by the government, except that it is a loan stock issued by a private company paying a fixed interest rate. The capital value fluctuates in line with market expectations, although they are more stable than equities. Ryan is concerned with the prospect of a single currency, but this development should see UK interest rates fall into line with the generally lower rates in Europe, and this is expected to boost the capital value of UK corporate bonds.

Ryan is holding so much cash in his PEP because of concerns about the height of the UK stock market, hence the interest in the corporate bond PEP. Mrs Williams should structure this by making use of her general PEP allowance. The fund selection can always be varied in the future. The relatively high yield available of, say, 7.8 per cent

could be reinvested to boost capital growth, as income is not needed now. Corporate bonds could also prove to be a more attractive investment than cash in Ryan's PEPs for the reasons highlighted above.

Although the traditional bed-and-breakfast arrangements have been outlawed, selling part of their direct equity portfolio for reinvestment into the more tax advantageous PEP environment is still permitted, but care would have to be taken to ensure the gain on any shares sold remained below the annual CGT exemption. Indemnity will only apply on gains until 5 April 1998, so short-term gains will be taxed at a higher rate, (40 per cent) than long-term gains, (24 per cent).

Mrs Williams has been contributing the maximum £250 per month to a Esop share save scheme with her employer. The first tranche of shares is due in the next tax year, and any encashment could possibly utilise both of their annual CGT allowances. The shares have benefited greatly from the rise in banking stocks in recent months.

They have sufficient death-in-service and income protection benefits in the event of illness, provided by their employers. However, they do not have a will. This is a number one priority for them.

Their combined estate is more than the inheritance tax exemption limit of £223,000 (from 6 April), and a lack of some simple estate planning at this stage, such as planning to use at least part of the first nil rate band, could end up costing their children some of their inheritance, particularly if the more penal inheritance tax regime expected under Labour is introduced in the next few years.

They should also address the issue of long-term care in old age. The role of the state is being greatly reduced and, although we are awaiting the Royal Commission report on this, this is an issue of growing importance for many people like the Williams.

## Spotlight: Invest On-Line's UK Tracker PEP

The Product: Invest On-Line's UK Tracker PEP.

The Deal: Invest the maximum £6,000 PEP allowance for the year and Invest On-Line, the direct marketing arm of Royal & Sun Alliance, will give you some bargain basement charges. The money goes into a tracker fund which aims to mimic the performance of the FTSE All-Share index.

Plus Points: It really is very cheap if you invest the maximum. A 0.3 per cent annual management charge is as low as it gets; even Legal & General's annual management charge is higher at 0.5 per cent (Virgin's tracker fund, once among the cheapest, is quite expensive now at 1 per cent).

Tracker funds have significantly outperformed active fund managers.

Gartmore, PDFM and Mercury Asset Management are all suffering from clients disaffected by what they see as poor value for money.

Drawbacks and risks: Many now believe the market looks peaky, having grown by 40 per cent in the last year. If it takes a downturn, trackers will take the full weight of any fall. Active fund managers may - or may not -

outperform a tracker in a sluggish market. In 1994, they did much the same as trackers. As with 1987 and 1990, two other occasions when stock markets fell and most managed funds failed to better tracker performance.

The charges have a few snags. Whereas L&G just has a management fee, Invest On-Line takes a bid/offer spread of 0.8 per cent. Still cheap, but

if you invest less than £6,000, there's a 2 per cent initial charge and a 2.7 per cent bid/offer spread, which is not so cheap. If you invest the same £6,000 with L&G through the PEP Shop in Nottingham (0115 9825105), you'll also get a 1 per cent cash rebate, worth £60. Verdict: Cheap but not the cheapest, and safer investments exist. Marks out of five: Three

## The Corporate Bond PEP

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## 3/PERSONAL FINANCE

## Best bets for carpetbaggers

Halifax's bid for Birmingham Midshires has opened the floodgates for yet more windfalls. Iain Morse reports

Just when building societies began to think it was safe to go back into the water, carpet-bagging sharks start to appear all over again. Thousands of would-be members, temporarily denied the right to join up, have taken advantage of the new relaxation in the rules to begin queuing round the block once more.

The irony of all this, after almost nine months in which building societies have quietly been winning back business from their demutualised rivals, is that it flows from events at one society that had already sold itself off last year.

Birmingham Midshires,

which had been touting itself around the City for at least 12 months, finally found a buyer and agreed last summer to put a £630m offer from Royal Bank of Scotland to its members. The deal would have given an average payout of £630 per member. Then, earlier this month, Halifax stepped in to trump the agreed deal with a £780m offer for Midshires, producing an extra £150 per person.

The significance of this deal is the questions it raises about other societies, similar in size to Birmingham Midshires or barely smaller but equally highly regarded: if Halifax is so keen on

this deal, what might the others be worth to another buyer?

Last year, five building societies demutualised. Those who shared in the bonanza have been amply rewarded. Alliance & Leicester gave each member 250 shares last April, with an initial trading price of 542p per share. They now sell for around 927p per share.

Bristol & West paid an average £1,100 in cash to savers of the qualifying period of membership for share windfalls. A society could backdate this to the first press speculation on demutualisation. Others have increased the minimum balance to qualify. Nationwide has gone one step further: membership can be secured by depositing just £1 but new members are required to sign away windfall rights to charity.

However, some societies have reduced the minimum amounts needed to open membership accounts. Portman, the fifth largest, will accept just £100 to open a savings account. Bradford & Bingley opened a record 700,000 new accounts last year and does not deny bagging "beggars".

But care is needed. First of all, windfalls are not guaranteed. Societies demutualising can

choose whether to distribute cash or shares. The law prevents cash windfalls to members of less than two years. Bristol & West gave this group preference shares, whose price is more a function of interest rates than company performance.

There are no statutory rules on the qualifying period of membership for share windfalls. A society could backdate this to the first press speculation on demutualisation. Others have increased the minimum balance to qualify. Nationwide has gone one step further: membership can be secured by depositing just £1 but new members are required to sign away windfall rights to charity.

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Anyone seeking membership of the top 10 societies will need to invest a total of over £10,000 into various savings accounts. This is a hefty amount, so picking mutuals most likely to convert looks set to be the "baggers' new game."

Rob Thomas, banking analyst at Warburg's, has clear selection criteria. "Big mutuals don't have much of a future but smaller ones will survive as niche players. Management drives conversion. Societies used to have home-grown management teams, happy with the mutual ethos. But now they recruit from PLCs."

The chief executive of a society must get approval for conversion from board, Mr Thomas adds. "These are often composed of city types, who lose little sleep over giving up mutual status. Banks want to buy up building societies as a means of expansion. Finding an offer sufficient to tempt members with windfalls is not a problem."

If Mr Thomas is correct, Bradford & Bingley must be a



Conversion benefits: Woolwich's share handouts are now worth £2,000 on average

front runner for conversion. Its chief executive David Rodriguez's last job was running Thomas Cook. He has already bought up specialist lender Mortgage Express and the estate agency chain Black Horse from Lloyds/TSB.

With plans to grow from assets of £30bn over the next 10 years, this raises the prospect of non-mutual elements in the group generating most of its profits. However, its spokesman insists: "We are totally com-

mitted to mutual status". Few analysts are convinced.

Other conversion favourites include Britannia, big enough to survive as a non-mutual, and Portman, with results good enough to attract bids. Meanwhile, the Chelsea has just fended off "Members for Conversion", which sought to take demutualisation to a member's vote, by the simple expedient of closing the accounts of some 60 members who wanted a vote on deconversion.

Meanwhile, mutual life insurers are also coming under pressure to convert to PLC status. Norwich Union and the Australia's Colonial Mutual converted last year, with NPI and some of the smaller Scottish life offices tipped as future prospects. According to Mr Thomas: "Smaller life offices can survive times of boom but will face difficulties if the economy slows down.... Start an endowment or buy one second hand to benefit from windfalls."

## CARPETBAGGING COSTS

Top 10 Building Societies - minimum opening balance for new members

Nationwide: £1 to open an account with member status, but windfalls go to charity.  
Bradford & Bingley: £1,000 instant access, £500 for one-year bond, £10 monthly savings plan, £100 confers membership.  
Britannia: £5,000 instant access, £2,000 five-year bond.  
Yorkshire: £2,000 Tessa, 90-day account, or branch account, £3,000 postal account.  
Portman: £100 branch instant access, £1,000 postal instant access, £500 one-year bond.  
Coventry: £2,500 branch accounts and postal instant access.  
Skipton: £2,000 branch instant access, and £5,000 for other accounts.  
Leeds & Holbeck: £1,000 branch account, £2,000 postal account.  
Chelsea: £1,000 branch or postal account.  
Derbyshire: £1,000 in Derbyshire area, £5,000 elsewhere.



ROBIN AMLOT  
INTERNET  
INVESTOR

## Where angels go to find business opportunities

This month a new "stock market" was launched on the internet, the Development Capital Exchange (DCX). It is specifically designed for informal investment in unlisted small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).

These are companies looking for anything between £10,000 and £2m in funds, which do not meet bank lending or venture capital criteria. DCX is not a match-making service for "business angels" but acts as an information conduit.

This informal investment sector is said to be worth around \$200bn in the US, five times larger than the formal venture capital industry. On that basis, DCX reckons the potential value of its market to be at least £10bn in private investment in British SMEs.

The Private Equity Funding Association, the organisation behind DCX, says the marketplace received a major boost in the Budget.

Changes by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to the capital gains tax (CGT) regime with the introduction of a long-term, 10-year CGT rate of just 10 per cent is likely to encourage investment in start-up and expanding SMEs whose need is overwhelmingly for long-term, patient capital.

Potential investors surfing on to DCX are immediately presented with a warning, which is more comprehensive than that required by the Financial Services Act. DCX makes it very clear that the onus of "due diligence" rests entirely with the investor who should seek the advice of professional advisers.

The key difference between investing in quoted stock and participating as an investor/director in an unquoted company, is that the business plan is only a basis for negotiation. It is not an investment document and there is no protection should things go wrong.

You can see opportunities currently available on DCX by clicking on a summary listing. These business opportunities remain on the site for 90 days. If you want to get hold of more details, the site offers the option of a £15 "sample" subscription

for three months or a full 12-month subscription for £50.

Both these options include automatic e-mail notification of any investment opportunities that meet your specified personal search criteria of the size of the investment required, the business location and the industry sector.

You may be worried about being inundated with corporate begging for investment. Don't be. Investors subscribing to DCX remain anonymous until they decide to open negotiations with a company in which they are interested in investing.

You need only reveal your identity to the DCX member firm handling a particular opportunity when you are ready to open negotiations. However, the company or individual seeking funds is obviously within their rights to ask you to identify yourself before releasing a full business plan.

The detailed listing page contains the past three years' audited accounts, where these are available, together with three-year forecasts of turnover and profits. There is also a 200-word summary of the opportunity. This does not contain the name of the company or entrepreneur seeking funds but will direct the potential investor to a DCX member firm advising the business. This means the firm seeking funds is not put in the position of making a public offer of shares without a prospectus.

If, after reading the detail of an individual opportunity, you want to see a copy of a business plan, you can click an icon on the case-listing page that will give you the DCX member's details and make contact automatically through e-mail.

Remember, private equity funding is no guarantee of quick capital gain or, in the case of start-up enterprises, even a regular income.

If your capital is comprised of a lump-sum portion of a pension scheme - or a redundancy settlement or any other source outside your regular income - think very, very carefully before committing any or all of it to such an investment. Development Capital Exchange www.equity-invest.com

The tax regime of PEPs and ISAs may change, and the value of the tax benefits will depend on the individual circumstances of the investor. The price of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up, you may not get back as much as you invest. The value to you of the benefits will depend on your own circumstances. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future performance. M&G do not offer investment advice or make any recommendation regarding investments - we only promote the packaged products and services of the M&G marketing group. (Source: M&G, 1st means top quartile to 1.1.98, gross income reinvested for Blue Chip over 5 years and for Managed Income since launch on 1.1.93 and Corporate Bond since launch on 2.5.94. There is a difference between buying and selling prices. Issued by M&G Financial Services Limited (Regulated by The Personal Investment Authority). Registered Office: M&G House, Victoria Road, Cheshamford CM1 1FR. M&G Unit Trusts are managed by M&G Securities Limited (Regulated by IMRO and The Personal Investment Authority).

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## Post-Budget Tip

"You can now use PEP allowances in this and the next tax year without worrying about ISAs." Investors Chronicle 20 March 1998.

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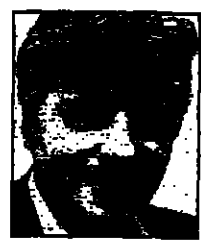
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For the price of a five minute local phone call, you can secure your tax free 1997/98 M&G PEP in good time before the April 5th deadline.





# How to find the best unit trusts



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Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The phrase is mandatory in all ad-

vertisements for unit trusts and other equity-based financial products. But what actually does it mean?

By trawling the historical record, and juggling with the start and end dates, there is always one period where the performance of a fund can be made to appear as good as anything else around. If you want to be precise about it, the predictive value of unfiltered past-performance statistics is nil.

The statistical evidence on this point is uncompromising - just as clear, in fact, as the finding that 75 per cent of all managed funds consistently fail to outperform the market averages over a five-year period.

So should one just revert to throwing a dart at a list of unit trusts? Clearly not. Common sense tells us that some fund

managers are better than others.

The good news is that the tools to make meaningful comparisons between different funds are becoming both more sophisticated and gradually more widely available. Raw data on the performance of funds is available from a number of sources.

But this still leaves the question of how to interpret the data. A pioneer of sophisticated fund performance analysis in this country is Fund Research, started around 10 years ago by two ex-Fidelity fund managers.

Peter Jeffreys, managing director of Fund Research, uses a combination of a sophisticated quantitative screening system and detailed qualitative assessments of individual managers to rank and rate the best funds in the UK. The main quantitative technique he uses involves look-

ing at the consistency of a fund's performance and the frequency with which it appears in the top echelons of the performance tables. This in turn produces a weighted score which measures consistency. Fund Research also produces a series of statistical measures to measure each fund's risk profile, backed up by detailed interviews with fund managers.

The table shows how the top 10 unit trusts in one particular sector, UK equity growth, measure up. A score of 10 means a fund was in the top 10 per cent of all the funds in its sector in a particular period; a 9 means it ranked in the second 10 per cent, and so on down the list.

The method aims to weed out funds which, thanks to one particularly good year, suddenly appear in the top echelons

## UK Equity growth - performance order net income reinvested

	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	Consistency Score
BGI UK Growth	9	8	9	9	9	87.0
S&P Premier Equity Growth	8	7	8	8	9	81.8
Fidelity Special Situations	10	9	7	10	8	78.8
Jupiter UK Growth	10	8	10	9	4	78.8
Spina UK Growth	4	7	10	10	5	78.8
Fidelity UK Growth	8	9	8	8	7	78.3
Hylands Balanced Growth	6	3	9	9	7	78.3
Martin Currie UK Growth	4	10	10	8	5	78.3
Schroder UK Enterprise	9	9	10	8	4	78.3
Perpetual UK Growth	8	9	10	6	6	75.5

Source: Fund Research

of the league tables, only to disappear like a shooting star the next. They are the funds to be avoided. By contrast, lucky the investor who can find the few stalwarts, such as Fidelity Special Situations, which have

been consistent outperformers for nearly 20 years.

How good is this method at picking winners? Well, that depends on your point of view. According to Fund Research, their methodology increases the

predictive power of the performance figures from even to about 2-1 on. In other words, there is a two-thirds chance that a fund which scores well in the consistency tables will stay above average in the future - which is better, but not a clincher.

You would not know from the table alone, for example, that the number one trust, BGI UK Growth fund, had a very indifferent record in the five years immediately before the period covered by this analysis. At the time, it was known as the Barclays Unicorn Special Situations fund, and the new fund has been formed by amalgamating it with two other funds in the old Unicorn stable. It is now run in a quite different way from its predecessor (for the better in my view).

So, even with sophisticated

tools, you or your financial adviser still have to do some detective work to pick out the best funds - and even the very best fund managers have occasional poor years. Mr Jeffreys makes the point that this tends to happen when markets are running away with themselves, (now being a case in point).

The wider point, however, is the more important one. Better screening facilities means buyers are becoming more sophisticated, which in turn is forcing providers to sharpen up their act.

The remarkable fact about the unit trust business, in retrospect, is not how few consistently good performers there have been - but how so many of the also rans have survived for so long, despite providing a rotten service to their users.

## UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET: JOHN ANDREW

### Buying shares? First pick your broker

A luxury service costs money. So decide how much you want to pay your stockbroker



Dial-a-deal Telephone dealing is - usually - easy

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Shares can be bought or sold only through a stockbroker who is a member of the London Stock Exchange. Share-dealing services come in many forms: by phone or post, and in person.

You will see advertisements for telephone share-dealing services in newspapers and magazines. Many people use the services offered by their bank or building society, while others prefer to deal direct with a broker. It depends on the level of service you require.

The service offered by telephone and in the high street tends to be "no frills". The term used to describe this basic buying and selling of shares is the somewhat macabre phrase "execution only"; the institution will undertake your instructions, but will not give investment advice.

This does not mean that they will not guide you through the procedure for the transaction. On request, some will also provide basic information such as the current price, yield and the p/e ratio. However, should you be undecided as to which of two shares to purchase, no advice will be forthcoming.

This is perfectly adequate for anyone who knows precisely what they want. It also has the advantage of being inexpensive. Typically, for deals below £5,000, the charge is 1 per cent on the value of the transaction, subject to a minimum of £20. If periodically you are likely to want to telephone for basic information, do check that the company will provide this.

It is easy to set up an execution-only arrangement. As your bank or building society already has you, this will be a mere formality. However, where you are not known, you may be asked to give your address and banking details in addition to providing some form of identity.

If you would like to control your own portfolio of shares, but would like the safety net of being able to fall back on the opinion of a professional, you require an advisory facility. This is a basic service available from traditional stockbrokers, and is more expensive than the execution only share dealing that is available in the high street. The commission for the deals, which is calculated as a percentage of the shares traded, will include an element for the advice.

By opting for an advisory service, you are establishing a relationship with a broker. Normally there will be an initial interview, which is conducted without a fee being charged. Do your homework before this, for in order to conform to the regulatory requirements, the broker will

have to complete a "fact find". He will want to know details of your income, commitments and assets, whether you are looking for income or growth, and your attitude towards risk.

It is only by asking such questions that the broker will be able to give you good advice based on your circumstances.

Many investors consider that the higher commission is well worth paying to have advice readily available. However, do not abuse the service by constantly telephoning for a chat if you deal only occasionally. Should you develop a good rapport with the broker, you could well find that you receive a phone call if an investment opportunity arises which he or she considers may interest you.

Many stockbrokers and all institutions offering private banking offer a complete portfolio management service to clients. This comes in two forms - discretionary and advisory. With a discretionary arrangement, the service provider takes full control of the portfolio, buying and selling shares with the aim of maximising the client's objectives.

The advisory form means that the changes are made only after consultation with and agreement by the client. Typically, the charges for such services are 1 per cent of the value of a portfolio up to £250,000 (minimum £1,250), plus dealing costs. These services are not for small investors.

If you decide upon a basic advisory as opposed to an execution-only service, you need to find a broker who will offer you what you want at the price you are prepared to pay. The Association of Private Client Investment Managers and Stockbrokers (APCIMS) publishes a directory listing all stockbrokers who provide a service to private investors.

This outlines the services each firm provides. Do your research and go and see those in your short list before deciding which one is for you. Brokers who have a high minimum commission are politely saying that they do not cater for small investors.

For a copy of the directory of stockbrokers, contact APCIMS, 112 Middlesex Street, London E1 7HY (0171-247 7080).

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## A hard financial lesson to learn

Rules forcing companies to disclose their fees to investors have failed to live up to hopes that they might cut costs.

James Moore reports

"If consumers really understood how poor many financial products are then they simply couldn't be sold," is one of the hard-hitting conclusions of a Consumers' Association report into financial services.

The report, entitled *Disclosure: Protecting Consumers*, says consumers have an alarmingly low level of knowledge about financial products and blames a lack of education, the financial services companies and the approach taken by the City watchdog, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA).

The PIA forces companies to disclose a wide range of details about their products with the aim of pro-

tecting consumers but the report says this has "failed".

The association wants radical change and calls for products to be rated on a scale of one to five for factors including performance, charges, and flexibility, leading to the eventual introduction of a kite marking system.

The report comes as the Financial Services Authority, the Government's new super financial regulator that will take on the PIA's responsibilities, publishes research warning that many people have poor financial literacy and saying there are "significant gaps" in the provision of financial education.

The PIA's disclosure regime insists consumers are provided with a "key features" document before buying a financial product. This contains brief descriptions of products' aims, with details such as the effect of charges, projections on how much money the investor might get back, risk warnings, the effect of any tax, the consumer's commitment to pay premiums, and more.

Efforts are made to keep them simple but they often run to

several pages. According to the CA this means many people get put off and simply do not bother to read them.

The CA survey found nearly half its sample did not even know they had a key features document and three quarters had not read it, few were aware of what charges they were paying and there was a general mistrust of financial services companies.

Mick McAteer, senior policy officer at the Consumers' Association, says: "We already had strong anecdotal evidence that disclosure was not working. The charges on personal pensions, for example, have hardly come down since it was introduced. We wanted to find out what was going on at the point of sale."

Mr McAteer adds: "Our findings underlined the need for a re-think of the regulation of financial services. The financial services industry is years behind other sectors, such as electrical goods and motor cars, in terms of 'safety' and the level of confidence felt by consumers when buying products."

The Consumers' Association calls

for greater education but says this must not be used by the industry as a way of trying to persuade people to buy more products.

It argues in favour of a rating system which builds on a model already used in *Which?* magazine. This in effect provides a benchmark, plus a set of scores which mark products according to how close they are to the benchmark.

The education campaign, the CA says, is intended to enhance consumer interest and confidence, while at the same time promoting the relevance of financial planning in people's everyday lives. Among the things the report wants to see is further promotion of the benefits of fee-based independent financial advice.

Ultimately, the CA believes, much of the problem lies with poor products. The report argues that rating products must also mean introducing minimum standards. This means setting maximum charges, restricting transfer penalties and enhancing flexibility of products: "Confidence can be improved through education, but it will be misguided if substandard products per-



Alarming: that's consumers' knowledge of financial products, according to the CA

Nicola Kurtz

## Simple solutions to attract small savers

The findings have been given a cautious welcome in certain sectors of the industry, as James Moore finds out

While not everyone agrees with the details in the Consumers' Association's report, its findings have been welcomed in some parts of the industry.

Virgin Direct has launched a campaign to persuade the Government to bring in kite marking for its new Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) and stakeholder pensions.

Martin Campbell, Virgin's product development manager, says: "The real problem is that there is a complete lack of consumer confidence in financial services. Our argument is that there should be minimum standards for a simple group of products so a consumer knows there are no stings in the tail and can be confident. We like a lot of what the Consumers' Association is saying."

Significantly, many independent financial advisers have some sympathy with what the report is saying, albeit coming to it from a different perspective. Nick Conyers, a director of Pearson Jones, says: "I'm encouraged that the Consumers' Association recognises that the disclosure regime is not helpful for consumers."

"Our clients often complain when we send them key features documents because of the amount of paper. We have to tell them this is a regulatory requirement. Consumers have to be informed but there has to be a better way of doing it."

John Cole, managing director of Berry Birch and Noble, agrees that the disclosure regime is too complex but sounds a note of caution. He says: "A ratings regime could potentially be a dangerous over-simplification of consumer requirements on financial products."

Some financial services companies, including some of

the more expensive ones, are more wary. Abbey Life's pension plan is dearer than average. Its projected maturity value, the amount paid out when a £60-a-month policy matures, is £46,300 after costs are taken out, assuming 9 per cent fund growth a year. This compares with an average for other shareholder-owned companies of £48,629. Abbey's policies are also less competitive than many of its rivals in the first few years, when heavy up-front charges suck away large chunks of policyholders' funds.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Tim Potten, the company's product marketing manager, says: "Anything which helps consumers is good but I'm not sure whether this idea would be better than disclosure."

"Products are often complex for good reasons and it would be dangerous to have something too simplistic, you may be comparing apples with pears. A product might look bad in charges but it might be meeting a specific need."

The PIA also appears lukewarm. Sarah Modlock, the watchdog's head of press, says: "Disclosure is evolving all the time. The Consumers' Association has its ideas about this and we note them with interest."

This implies that calls for radical change from Virgin and the CA or even the more conservative appeals from independent financial advisers are unlikely to be heeded soon.

But interestingly, in the Government's Budget press release on the Individual Savings Account it says it is looking at a voluntary system to ensure these products are simple enough to attract small savers. It may be that this is an idea whose time has come.

## The Index-Tracking PEP

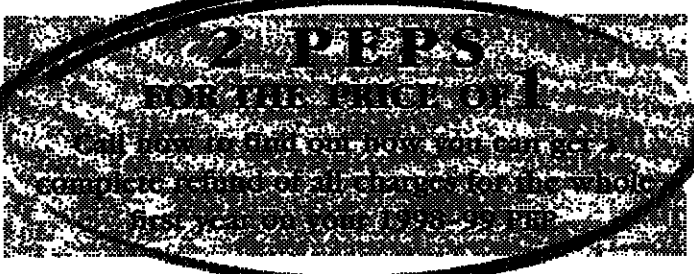
\*Source: Micropal/LGIM, on an offer to bid basis based on all PEP charges with gross income re-invested from 01.11.95 (Legal & General since launch) to 03.03.98. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. From 06.04.99 tax credits will no longer be able to be reclaimed by PEPs investing in equity based unit trusts. Both capital and income values may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount invested. All comparisons of cost apply to PEPs investing wholly in unit trusts. Full written details are available on request. All statements are correct as at 03.03.98. The Government have announced that contributions can only be made to PEPs until April 1999. From that date a new tax privileged savings vehicle, the Individual Savings Account (ISA) will be available. Legal & General (Direct) Limited, Registered in England No. 2702080. Registered Office: Temple Court, 11 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4N 4TP. Representative only of the Legal & General marketing group, members of which are regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and IMRO for the purposes of recommending, advising on and selling life assurance and investment products bearing Legal & General's name.

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### RECIPES FOR HAPPY CONSUMING

(The report at a glance)

\* The existing system of product disclosure has not worked. It is too cumbersome, jargonistic and confusing. The way it is presented puts people off reading it.

\* Disclosure has had little if any effect in reducing excessive charges on products, contrary to assumptions about their likely effect. Only eight out of 100 pensions analysed by the CA were "good value".

\* The CA survey found that the majority of policyholders did not even read the product particulars, including details of charges, that they received. Confidence in the industry was low and few people felt inclined to "shop around".

\* Clients responded best to verbal communication – suggesting that if they are with an adviser they trust, they are more receptive to information imparted orally.

\* The CA recommends an education campaign to increase people's confidence in their dealings with the industry and also their knowledge. But this should not be used to sell more products.

\* There should be a rating system for products, linked to a benchmark against which any assessment can be made. Ultimately, the CA believes, there should be a "kite marking" system, in which minimum standards are set for products in terms of charges, flexibility and transfer penalties.

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To claim your 97-98 PEP, you must call before March 30th

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COLLECT TO INVEST: JOHN WINDSOR

## Marks of distinction

It is 1914 in Petrograd. Amid guttering candles, the mad monk Rasputin is holding a seance with his followers in a private house. Suddenly, in the gloom, his eyes flash. He scribbles a note and passes it to the host. The note reads: "Bright light does not come from dark coffers."

A dark thought that will give nightmares unless it is burned. But the note has survived. You can buy it for an estimated £3,000-£4,000 at Sotheby's sale of a big private collection of autograph letters on Tuesday (10.30am).

Is it worth paying that much for a scrap of paper? Well, the note comes with a written authentication by the host, Mahivsky - a revelation to some historians who still believe that Rasputin was illiterate. It is a great rarity.

Apart from that, its value lies both in Rasputin's name - he is likely to remain one of history's big bogymen for generations to come - and in the fascinating content of the note. This is no mere reply to an invitation to tea.

On the minus side, the note is written in Russian and has no immediate appeal to English speakers. You would have to give your friends a mini-lecture, showing them Sotheby's catalogue and Mahivsky's testimony in order to impress

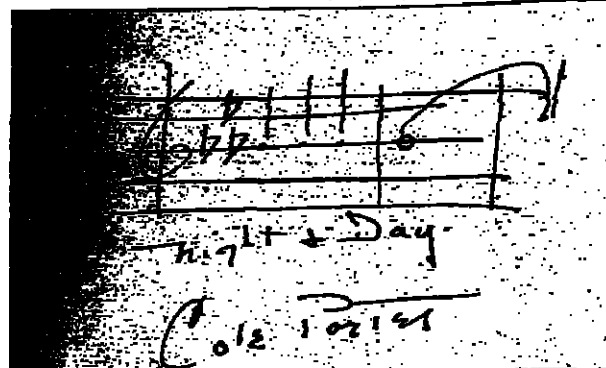
them. And Russian autograph history is a narrow field. Not many people collect it, so prices across the board are not likely to take off.

Fame, content, rarity - these are the main considerations when contemplating buying autograph letters and signed photographs for investment.

Put simply, value is largely determined by news value (good journalists should make good investors). For example, a signed photograph of Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, is worth \$450 (£280) to collectors, while one signed by the second man on the moon - who was he, now? Ah, yes, Buzz Aldrin - is worth only \$270 (£170).

Most important of all: paper is being made obsolete by information technology. Few of today's up-coming historical and literary figures start their day by penning a score of letters - so the value of those that survive is bound to rise. A run-of-the-mill letter by gloomy Gladstone can still be had for around £75 and one by dashing Disraeli for £300. (Disraeli wrote fewer letters, so his have an added rarity value.)

Tuesday's sale consists of 488 lots from the collection of the Hollywood film director George Cosmatos and his late wife, Birgit. Cosmatos sums up what must be the enduring



Noteworthy: Cole Porter's 'Night and Day' is expected to fetch up to £2,000 on Tuesday.

appeal of manuscripts as opposed to computer printouts: "If we touched a letter or a document written by an historical figure, it was though a tiny part of their life would become ours by osmosis through our fingertips. We felt that through the collection we caught glimpses of thousands of secret worlds."

The sale is likely to be a landmark, fixing prices for the next couple of years. It ranges widely from autographs by European literary and musical figures to those of lesser-known explorers, such as Sir Samuel Baker, whose letter of 1879 depicting the British occupation of Cyprus, estimated £1,200-£1,500, will have more appeal to public than private collections.

The collection, expected to raise £400,000, might have fetched more in New York or Los Angeles, but the European material, and Cosmatos's long association with Sotheby's London - where he bought heavily in the Eighties, have brought it here. Rich Americans can buy by telephone but they cannot view lots by telephone and this will dampen bidding somewhat. Also, Sotheby's has made sure not to over-egg estimates - as befits a big load of any collectable landing in the market in one go.

This could be the making of the market for autograph musical quotations - those few bars of favourite tunes dashed off by composers for admirers. They are much rarer than their letters. Cosmatos specialised in them. The star turn is Puccini's hand-drawn stave with a snatch of Tosca's duet with Cavaradossi in Act I of Tosca: £1,000-£1,500. But there is also Cole Porter's black-ink *Night and Day* (£1,500-£2,000), which must be "our tune" for countless couples - some of them with money to spend.

Then there are the signed photographs. Ten years ago, these were looked down on

because of their lack of content. Mere name hunting was frowned on. But they have now acquired cross-over value due to the increased interest in the history of photography.

A *carte-de-visite* full-length photograph of Dickens - they are rarer than you might think - is estimated £3,000-£3,500 in the sale. The fact that it is signed on both sides has - unaccountably, to me, at any rate - added a grand or two to its value. The same photograph was bought by Cosmatos for \$6,325 (£4,000) in another landmark sale at Christie's East in New York in April 1996. This sale, of another private collection, put signed photographs on the map. A big, 13in by 10in signed photograph of the composer Mahler - a wonderful image - made a whopping \$22,633 (£14,000). In the same sale, a photograph signed by the youthful Churchill in 1905 made \$3,450 (£2,000).

Churchill is in big demand in

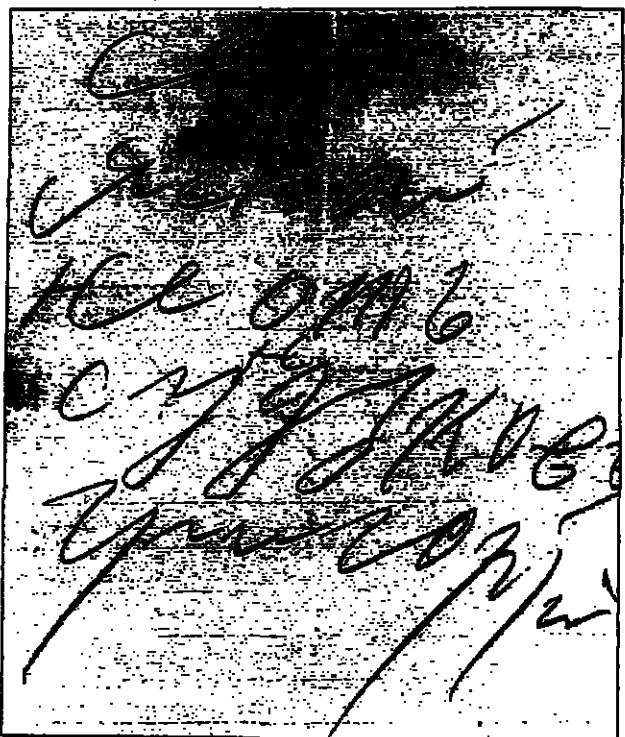
the United States - as are all World War II autographs. Veterans of the war are at an age when their families have fled the coop and many have time and money to collect. In the forthcoming sale, a photograph of Field Marshal Montgomery receiving the Gorman surrender at Luneberg Heath on 4 May 1945, signed by him at a later date, is estimated \$800-£1,200.

And are autographs by French Impressionists underpriced? The market for their paintings and the market for their autographs probably do not influence one another. But a letter by Camille Pissarro in which he prices his paintings at 1,000-2,000 francs - a thousand times less than they fetched following his death in 1903 - must be a snip at an estimated £600-£800.

Beware of ephemeral ephemera. In the fame game, the names of film stars and sportsmen are much less likely to hold their value than those of statesmen and literary-artistic figures - even after you have sifted out the Auto-pen signatures doled out to film fans.

Here are some cautionary examples. Jane Russell's signed photograph, now worth \$25 (£15), was worth £30-£40 during her heyday in the Fifties. One signed by Mary Pickford, "the world's sweetheart" in the Thirties, is worth £35. Arthur Askey, the Forties radio comic: a pitiful £1.

Sotheby's, 34-35 New Bond St, London W1 (0171-293 5000).



Imperial relics: This note by Russian monk Rasputin from a seance in 1914 is estimated at £3,000 - £4,000

The value of shares and any income from them can go down as well as up. Past performance is no guide to future returns. Tax concessions are not guaranteed, their value will depend on individual circumstances. It will not be possible to continue investment in a PEP after April 1999 when the Government plans to introduce Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs). Threadneedle Investment Services Limited, Authorised Corporate Director and Unit Trust Manager. Threadneedle Portfolio Services Limited, PEP Manager. Regulated by the Financial Services Authority. Members of the Allied Dunbar and Threadneedle marketing group.

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What is more, as the UK's 7th largest fund manager,\* with performance which puts our competitors in the shade, Threadneedle's ground breaking PEP should continue to meet your needs now and in the future.

Before you commit to a PEP this year, make an informed decision.

Fund Manager*	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years
Threadneedle	1st	1st	1st	1st	3rd
Barclays Global Inv	2nd	2nd	3rd	2nd	4th
M&G Securities	3rd	3rd	6th	6th	5th
Perpetual	4th	4th	2nd	3rd	2nd
Mercury Fund M'ngers	5th	6th	5th	5th	6th
Fidelity Investments	6th	5th	4th	4th	1st
Schroder UT Ltd	7th	7th	7th	7th	7th

\*Source: Investment Intelligence, 1/2/98, offer to offer basis. Largest 7 Unit Trust Management Groups' relative weighted performance. Sorted by 1 year performance.

Ask your financial adviser about Threadneedle's PEP or call us free on **0500 600566**.

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Barclayloan is offering customers who take out one of its loans a card entitling them to £1 off any video rental each week from Blockbuster Video. Loans between £500 and £3,400 are set at 20.9 per cent APR, falling to 13.9 per cent on loans above £12,000. Call 0500 200250.

Holden Meehan, independent financial adviser, is offering to pay to Oxfam half the normal commission and two-thirds of the annual renewal fee it would earn from sales of the Jupiter Ecology Fund PEP. On a £5,000 sale, £90 would go to Oxfam. Investors also receive a 1 per cent discount on sales. Call 0800 7314505.

Capel-Cure Myers is donating £150 to Help the Aged's Brighter Futures Appeal for every £10,000 minimum investment into its Hallmark Growth or Income funds before the end of May. Call 0171-488 0505.

Skipton Building Society is offering applicants for shares in Thomson Travel Group, which is seeking a stock market flotation, entry into a draw with a £3,000 Thomson holiday as the prize. Second and third prizes of £1,500 and £1,000 holidays are also on offer. Call 0800 1380800.

Using a tax-free allowance, all making are six thought

can all PEP come from the excellent investment arm of

When so many PEPs are being sold, it's a good idea to invest in the best

Which is better - funds or shares? Back an index or fund? What are actively managed?

Is a large PEP provider better than a small one?

How important is support?

How important are the fund managers?

FOR AN INVESTMENT INCLUDING AN AFTERNOON SUNDAY TELEVISION



**20% DISCOUNT ON  
STOP PRESS! What Investment Overall  
Fund Management Group of the Year - 10th March 1998**

# PEPS. SPOILED FOR CHOICE? OR SIMPLY CONFUSED?

Choosing a tax-free PEP can be a pretty taxing business - especially with so many PEP companies, all making claim and counter claim about why they're the best. Here are six thoughts that may help you to find your way through the PEP maze.

## 1. How can all PEP companies advertise excellent investment performance?

Most funds perform well at one time or another. You may find that a fund has performed well for a particular period, but not at other times. The acid test is long-term consistency. Year in, year out. Not just in one fund, but in the company's range of funds.

## 2. How can so many PEP companies advertise investment awards?

In such a large and competitive industry, there are a lot of awards to win. Some companies win an award one year, only to disappear the next. On the other hand, a company that wins major awards every year is hard to ignore.

## 3. Which is better - funds that track an index or funds which are actively managed?

Each has its place. But trackers can't avoid investing in big companies when they're falling, and are unable to invest a bigger proportion of money in them when they're rising. An actively managed fund has the freedom to do both.

## 4. Is a large PEP provider better than a small one?

Both have their merits. But a large provider is more likely to be able to offer you the extensive resources, investment choice and consistent track record that you're looking for.

## 5. How important is service?

PEP managers deal with the Inland Revenue so that you don't have to. That's why finding a PEP Manager with fast, efficient and helpful administration and service is vital.

## 6. How important are the fund managers?

For actively managed PEPs, the quality of the investment team is essential. Make sure you choose a company which is able to retain top-quality fund managers rather than a company which is used as a stepping-stone to greater things.

## INVESTMENT AND SERVICE AWARDS

**1997**  
**INVESTMENT**  
Best PEP Products  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Best Unit Trust Products  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Best PEP Provider  
Money Marketing  
Best Unit Trust Provider  
Money Marketing

**1996**  
**INVESTMENT**  
Fund Management Group of the Year  
Investment Week  
Best Investment Management Group of the Year  
Microfund  
Best PEP Provider  
Money Marketing  
Best Unit Trust Provider  
Money Marketing

**1995**  
**INVESTMENT**  
Overall Unit Trust Group of the Year  
The Sunday Telegraph  
Overall Unit Trust Group of the Year  
What Investment/Personal Finance  
Best PEP Provider  
Money Marketing  
Best Unit Trust Provider  
Money Marketing  
Best Investment Management Group of the Year  
Microfund

**1994**  
**INVESTMENT**  
Best Overall Group Performance  
Money Marketing  
Fund Management Group of the Year  
What Investment  
Best UK Investment Trust  
Money Observer

**1993**  
**INVESTMENT**  
International Unit Trust Manager of the Year  
The Sunday Times  
Overall Unit Trust Group of the Year  
The Sunday Telegraph  
Unit Trust Manager of the Year  
The Observer

**SERVICE**  
Fund Management Group of the Year  
Personal Investment Marketing Show  
Best PEP Service  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Best Unit Trust Service  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Five Star Service Award  
The IFA Association and Financial Adviser  
Savings Market

**SERVICE**  
Fund Management Group of the Year  
Personal Investment Marketing Show  
Best PEP Service  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Best Unit Trust Service  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Five Star Service Award  
The IFA Association and Financial Adviser  
Best Service - Investments  
Savings Market

**SERVICE**  
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Best Unit Trust Service  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Five Star Service Award  
The IFA Association and Financial Adviser  
Best Service - Investments  
Savings Market

**SERVICE**  
Fund Management Group of the Year  
Personal Investment Marketing Show  
Best PEP Service  
Sherwood/Planned Savings  
Five Star Service Award  
The IFA Association and Financial Adviser

**SERVICE**  
Fund Management Group of the Year  
Personal Investment Marketing Show  
Five Star Service Award  
NFIFA and Financial Adviser

These are a selection of more than 100 awards which Perpetual has won over the last five years.

## And how does Perpetual measure up?

### Consistent performance.

Of the six Perpetual funds available for full PEP investment over the last five years, all have beaten the average fund in their sector. Of our total twenty-two funds, nineteen have beaten the average fund in their sector for their performance since launch, and sixteen are in the top 25%. Six lead their sectors.<sup>2</sup>

### The recognition of Independent Financial Advisers.

Perpetual has been voted top PEP Provider for the last four years<sup>3</sup> and Fund Management Group of the Year for the last five years<sup>4</sup> in polls of Independent Financial Advisers. We've also been named Unit Trust Manager of the Year by What Investment Magazine for the last five years. Just a selection of more than 150 investment and service awards that we've won since we began investing in 1974.

### The endorsement of more than half a million investors.

Last year, Perpetual sold more unit trust PEP funds than any other company.<sup>5</sup> Overall, we manage more unit trust PEP funds than any other company.<sup>6</sup> And we manage more than 550,000 individual plans. In 1997 alone, more than 135,000 people opened a PEP with Perpetual.

### Efficient administration and service.

The quality of Perpetual's service has earned top place in a poll of Independent Financial Advisers at their annual industry conference for the last five years running.<sup>4</sup>

### Committed, high-calibre fund management.

Perpetual's reputation for investment excellence means that we attract and retain some of the best fund managers in the industry. And because they stay with Perpetual, you get consistency of investment style and a solid foundation for your choice of PEP.

So how do you find out more about Perpetual's PEP? Talk to your Financial Adviser or call our 24-hour PEP Literature Line on the number below. Simply leave your name and address and we'll send you everything you need to open your Perpetual PEP. Alternatively, see tomorrow's quality press. We'll even give you a 2% discount.<sup>1</sup>



# Perpetual

**FOR AN INFORMATION PACK, CALL FREE ON 0800 00 77 00 NOW!  
YOU'LL ALSO FIND EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO OPEN YOUR PERPETUAL PEP,  
INCLUDING AN APPLICATION FORM, IN TOMORROW'S SUNDAY TIMES, OBSERVER,  
SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY AND MAIL ON SUNDAY.**

Perpetual Portfolio Management Limited, PO Box 131, Perpetual House, 47-49 Station Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1AF. www.perpetual.co.uk Regulated by IMRO.

1. Applies to unit trust PEP investments except the PEP Bond Fund, and cannot be added to any other discounts. 2. To 2.3.98 on a buying price to selling price basis with net income reinvested. Over the last 5 years, 13 of the 17 available funds have beaten the average fund in their sector. 3. 10 are in the top 25% (source: Standard & Poor's Microfund). 4. Personal Investment Marketing Show Awards. 5. Source: Fund Sales Report, February 1998. 6. Source: AUTIF December 1997. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. The value of an investment and the income from it can go down as well as up (this may partly be a result of exchange rate fluctuations) and you may not get back the amount invested. The value of current tax levels and their relief will depend on your individual circumstances and are subject to change. The tax regime under which PEPs exist will change from 6.4.98, the date on which the new Individual Savings Account will be introduced. The views expressed in this advertisement are those of Perpetual, and may be subject to change. Any recommendation which is given in this advertisement relates only to products marketed by the Perpetual group of companies.

# Cut the cost of saving for retirement

Personal pension holders may be paying £400m a year unnecessarily, John Chapman details the charge against the providers

Planning for retirement is an essential part of every individual's overall financial strategy. Private pensions, or stakeholder variants of them as proposed by the current Government, are one way of achieving this.

But research carried out for *The Independent* shows policyholders may be paying up to £400m a year more than they should into poor-value plans.

This is caused by the whopping charges many companies impose on the private pensions they sell. In particular, those who are forced to halt contributions into their schemes in the early years can be left with minimal lump sums with which to buy an income at retirement.

The table alongside this story illustrates what returns policyholders might get, and what companies may take in charges when premiums are

halted early on in the life of the policy and when they keep going until maturity.

For example, with Equitable Life you could count on a return of over 8 per cent on your premiums whenever you stopped them, assuming annual investment growth of 9 per cent.

As one moves down the list, charges become heavier and generally more front-end loaded - that is, levied at the start of a policy rather than throughout its life. With companies like Allied Dunbar, Skandia, Scottish Equitable and Sun Life, investors who halt contributions into their plans after two years would get very poor annual returns of around 3 per cent.

What companies actually take from their planholders on average will also depend on their "persistence rates", the percentage of people who "per-

sist" with a policy over given periods of time.

The table shows that three-year "persistence" ranges from 89.6 per cent with Standard Life (this means only 10 per cent of plans have lapsed after three years) to 58.9 per cent with Sun Life (almost 40 per cent of plans lapse after three years).

It is worth noting that the income received by companies from the policies they sell generally increases with the number of years they are kept up (though Allied Dunbar's plateau out early). This means life offices with high persistence rates, like NPI and Standard Life, take higher average amounts in charges than their charging levels might suggest.

Is it possible to estimate whether companies charge more than they should from the policies they sell? One way is to construct a hypothetical "benchmark" plan, with charges of only an initial 5 per cent bid/offer spread and an annual fund management charge of 1 per cent.

Such charges are reasonable.

They are higher than those for French savings products and in line with the average for UK unit trusts. They are actually bettered by a few pension companies, including some in the table below. The average company "take" for such a benchmark plan would be £1,470. The table also shows an "average" plan from a previous survey which would bring an average take of £2,100. In effect, this is an "extra" cost of £630 above that on the benchmark.

Such an extra cost arises on a plan with premiums of £200 a month. In one recent report by a financial regulator, average premiums are put at £112 a month, so the average extra "take" would be lower. But the report also shows that charges bear more heavily on smaller policies as some elements are fixed. Compared with the benchmark plan, the extra cost for all plans might average £400-450. Assuming sales of about 1 million plans a year, the overall extra cost to planholders is up to £400m a year.

## What they take and what you get

Projected returns to policyholders and charges taken by companies

Return to holders if premiums stop - at 2 yrs and maturity, %	Company	Persistence after 3 years, %	Charges (discounted) taken by companies at maturity, £	Average taken in charges £
8.2	Equitable Life	89.6*	368	1060
7.7	Marks & Spencer	66.3**	613	1070
7.8	Virgin	66.3**	563	1080
7.1	Alliance & Leicester	66.3**	864	1297
6.9	Legal & General	71.5	922	1818
6.7	Standard Life	89.6	989	2922
6.8	Scottish Widows	84.6	910	1818
4.7	Norwich Union	77.2	1710	2099
4.9	Scottish Life	73.4	1670	1874
4.7	NPI	84.7	1669	2265
4.2	Scottish Amicable	82.0	1612	2265
3.9	General Accident	79.4	1793	2300
4.7	NatWest	67.4	1698	2179
4.8	Barclays	69.6	1638	2359
2.8	Allied Dunbar	68.3	2156	2203
3.3	Scottish Equitable	71.8	2050	2740
3.3	Sun Life	58.9	2069	2246
3.9	Black Horse	82.8	1888	2500
2.9	Skandia	74.4	2146	2902
5.2	AVERAGE	72.3	1545	2107
7.6	BENCHMARK	na	639	1324
				2228
				1470

Notes: Projections assume 15 yr pension plans, with £200 pm premiums, and investment growth of 9.9% pa. The AVERAGE plan is the average of the plans in the above Money Management survey. The persistence figures are taken from the FPA report of November 1997. \*The persistence figures for Equitable Life are taken as the same as Standard Life's. \*\*Persistence rates are taken as the average for direct sales forces. The projected take in charges has been discounted at 10% pa. The average take uses the projected charges and persistence rate for each company.

Source: Money Management, 1997/John Chapman

## The watchdogs that failed to bark

Financial watchdogs appear unconcerned about the extra costs paid by hapless investors who take out personal pensions.

The latest report from the Personal Investment Authority, the front-line regulator, describes the charges on products sold by salesmen (as opposed to those bought off the page) as the "price of advice". It differentiates this from commission levels earned by the salespeople, which it calls the "cost of advice".

About two-thirds of the total bill to pension companies of the policies they sell come from "distribution costs" - that is, commissions to their salesmen/advisers and on marketing

expenses. Are the regulators deluding themselves (or others) by calling the cost of chasing down clients, known in the trade as "prospecting", and of completing sales as the "price of advice"?

In April last year, a joint investigation between *The Independent* and the *World in Action* television programme suggested that sales-patter rather than advice dominated, as far as many salespeople were concerned. A 50 per cent hike in commissions paid to salespeople reflected a battle by companies to secure distribution rather than better advice.

More recently, leading providers, in recognition of

the need to cut charges for better informed clients, have offered independent financial advisers (IFAs) a "menu approach".

They give IFAs the choice between their "usual" plan with a high upfront commission (which appears in industry surveys) and a lower-charge plan with a lower commission spread over several years.

Many, if not most, IFAs stick with the usual plan as they would have cash flow problems if they abandoned upfront commissions. But others are taking the flatter commissions and switching to the more competitive products, with charges much in line with our benchmark product. Can any-

one call the extra charges in the less-competitive usual products the "cost of advice"?

Another criticism of the regulators is their profligacy with public money. The recent study by Business Strategies, a consultancy acting for Direct Line, the telephone financial services provider, showed that the Treasury was spending £300m a year in tax relief for pension plans.

The study estimated that with about 1 million people taking out plans each year, and with over 300,000 of them lapsing within three years, some £100m a year of tax relief is "wasted" on products that will deliver poor or even non-existent payouts at retirement.

In fact, much of this tax relief is in effect passed on from losing planholders to the pension companies. As such, it must represent one of the most unjustified subsidies of an industry that has ever been given. Are any Parliamentary watchdogs taking note?

John Chapman

*The Independent* has produced a 'Guide to Direct Pensions', written by Nic Cicioti, its personal finance editor. The 26-page guide, sponsored by Eagle Star, a provider of cheap pensions by phone, covers a wide range of topics linked to retirement planning. It is available by calling 0800 776666. Or check the coupon on page 4.

## How a stakeholder scandal could still be averted

While the sins of the regulators may largely result from a faulty Thatcherite concept of self-regulation, the quixotic proposal of stakeholder pensions is blatantly wrong. This idea will really be "extravagantly romantic" if a wide variety of organisations, including employers, trade unions, retailers or any affinity groups are to offer new pension plans.

Will many of such organisations understand what they are up to? How will the new plans dovetail with the existing pension options? Will the result be bureaucratic and regulatory nightmares?

The better way ahead would be to build on the good features of the present pension plans and to oblige other providers to

come into line with them. There are already low-charge and good-value products offered by several providers, including Equitable Life, a range of direct sellers like Virgin, Marks & Spencer, Direct Line, Eagle Star, Merchant Investors and Legal & General, high street names like Alliance & Leicester, Nationwide and some traditional pension companies dealing with financially strong IFAs who are willing to take lower commissions.

The regulators must now tell the other providers that they have also to offer plans with charges and flexibility in line with benchmark plans or their equivalent. Otherwise there should be no tax relief forth-

coming on their particular products.

With such a scenario all the plans on offer would be good value. No planholders would face automatic losses or poor returns. Planholders could be saved £400m a year. Exchequer funding through tax reliefs would no longer be supporting poor products and practices.

All that would remain to create fully portable plans would be to require employers to contribute to the new plans as they do with occupational schemes. The essentials of stakeholder plans would also be delivered. There would be no mis-selling, as you cannot mis-sell a good product.

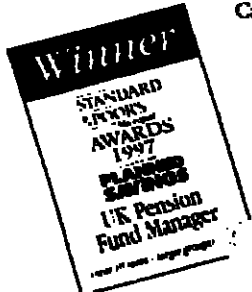
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# How to draw the buyers in

First impressions count when you're selling your property, and your windows on the world count most. Rosalind Russell lifts the veil on the curtain options.



Owning unfashionable curtains is hardly a hanging offence, but as far as estate agents are concerned they don't help a property to reach its potential asking price.

The agents Cluttons Daniel Smith even send a staff member round to clients' homes before a viewing is due, to make sure blinds have been lifted and curtains drawn, to maximise light in the rooms and create the right impression.

Cluttons also advises removing net curtains altogether (they make a room look as though its eyes are closed), having windows cleaned and investing in curtain tie-backs to make the room look more dresy. It may sound nit-picky, but the company's marketing policy is paying off. Good first impressions, it claims, have led to more viewings and sales.

Sales have been known to fall through because a buyer insisted on having the curtains included in the price of a property. "It all gets out of perspective," says Noel Flint of agents Knight Frank.

"Sometimes the curtains were made to match the bedspread, so the vendor wants to take them. We've even had a buyer demand the bedspread as well. But some people get very attached to their curtains, especially bachelors who consider they paid a fortune for them years ago and don't see why they should buy new ones now."

Well-made curtains which link with the walls and furnishings set off the room, says Noel Flint. They also prevent the echo in an empty room which can make it sound unfriendly.

"But curtains in strong colours or heavy material can seem dated, and give the impression of the house being caught in a time-war. And if the curtains are dated, what does that say about the wiring, or the plumbing?"

Buying new, ready-made curtains - easily alterable, so they can move with you - may be easier. Among the simplest

and best value are those from Off The Rails, from the Futon Company. Unusually, they sell one-size, single curtains, so you're not stuck with a conventional pair if you want to mix colours, or cover a three-curtain window width.

At £29.95 for a hand-woven curtain, you can afford to cut off the length for smaller windows. They have generous button-up loop tabs at the top to slide onto any curtain rail, so no fiddly curtain hooks are needed. Yarn dyed, they are 100 per cent pure cotton and come in nine colours, including a bold burnt

orange, a rich raspberry, and putty. Each curtain is 230cm long by 150cm wide.

Neutral-coloured cotton/linen mix curtains also cost £29.95 each, but coloured muslin curtains are just £8.95 each. The heavier, but fashionable one-size velvet curtains (230cm by 110cm) cost £34.95 each and can be used as room dividers, or around four-poster beds, as well as over windows. Colours include terracotta, lilac (this year's must-have shade), electric blue and peach. They can be bought by mail or from the stores.

Curtains for your hand-woven curtains in ten colours are among the ranges available from the Futon Company

Also good value, The Pier's tab-top single panel in sheer white with bright spots (100cm x 210cm) costs £29.95, and the metal curtain rod to go with it costs from £6.95, depending on length.

The Pukka Palace also sells loop-tab-top single curtains in dyed cotton voile, in star, leaf and swirl designs. Chunky rope tie-backs cost £9.50 each. As a clever variation on a theme, the pale grey patterned curtain fades from top to bottom, as does the golden yellow, while the indigo fades from sides to centre. They cost £18.50 each and measure 110cm by 228cm. At that price, you could even afford to leave them for an admiring buyer.

Marks & Spencer's ready-made Ottoman curtains in unfussy styles are unlikely to date quickly. They come with loop top, pelmet top, pencil pleat or sail-style eyelet top in cream, dark indigo, terracotta and pale yellow. Prices start at £65 a pair.

And if you do want your curtains to match the duvet cover, Coloroll do a range of ready-made curtains with matching bed linen. Perfect for spring, the Chantilly curtains, in lemon and white with spring flowers, cost from £45 a pair.

Off The Rails 0171-7369190; The Pukka Palace 0345 666660; The Pier 0171-814 5020; Marks & Spencer Home Direct 0345 902902; Coloroll 0800 0564878.

## THREE TO VIEW: HOLIDAY HOMES

As anyone who's tried to book a pretty country cottage for the Easter holidays will know, the best ones were all spoken for months - sometimes even a year - ago. Better to guarantee your holiday by buying a holiday home of your own, you may think, and rent it out when you don't need it. However, if you want a holiday cottage company to handle the lets, you'll find most will insist on being able to rent it during the peak times. Owners usually find themselves left with the weeks no one else wants.

You can handle the lets yourself, although that means chasing money, and finding a reliable cleaner. And there are tax allowances for running the property as a business. On the other hand, you could just keep it all to yourself... These three would be perfect.



The Toll House in Nether Stowey, eight miles from Bridgewater in Somerset, is in the centre of the village at the foot of the Quantock Hills, in prime holiday country. The owner already lets the curved, converted toll house as a holiday cottage. Although the house is small, and doesn't have a garden, it's exactly the sort to appeal to holiday-makers with an eye for the unusual. The front has Gothic-style windows and a Gothic door leading directly into an irregular shaped sitting room. An oak panel above the door leading into the kitchen shows ducks swimming. The kitchen is just 9ft 3in by 5ft 6in, but is fitted with units, hob and oven. There's space for a washer/drier. Upstairs, there's one bedroom, with a half-moon-shaped window, and a bathroom. Fixtures and fittings are to be negotiated separately. Agents Greenslade Taylor Hunt are asking £56,500 (01278 425555).

Mid Town of Belyhach is a three-bedroom cottage whose odd name is a mystery. It lies two miles up a no through road near Dufftown in Morayshire, and has uninterrupted views across its half-acre gardens to the Highland countryside. The hall has a curved staircase and leads to a sitting-room and lounge with interconnecting doors. The sitting-room has a built-in fish tank, which can be left if a buyer wants it. The 20ft lounge has partial wood panelling on the walls, and bookshelves built along one wall. It has an 18ft 10in farmhouse kitchen with oak-fronted units and a Rayburn, which heats the water. Outside, there is a large parking area and a landscaped garden with a five-tier pond and wooden bridge. There is a private water supply and mains electricity. The agents GA are asking for offers around £75,000.



John Hirst Cottage is a real Hansel and Gretel cottage, tucked in the middle of the woods in a Cheshire country park. It's reached via a half-mile track running alongside a river. The three-bedroom house was originally lived in by Etherow Country Park's warden, and was known as Keg Cottage. It was renamed in John Hirst's memory. The house has a large kitchen/dining-room, plus a separate dining-room with a brick-built open fire. It leads into a 15ft sitting room with a stone open fire and hearth, and a beamed ceiling. Two of the bedrooms have built-in wardrobes; the main bedroom has a cast-iron fireplace with tiled hearth. Many of the rooms have views over the country park. The gardens include a raised lawn with borders and pathways, enclosed by rhododendron hedging. The agents, Burdells, are asking for offers over £150,000 (0161 427 4096).



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